



January 2019

PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL

Secret Service and
DOD Need to Ensure
That Expenditure
Reports Are Prepared
and Submitted to
Congress

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-178](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Secret Service is responsible for protecting the President and his family, including adult children when they travel. The Secret Service can request assistance in its mission from other agencies, such as DOD and the Coast Guard. When the President travels, he must fly on DOD aircraft.

GAO was asked to review the travel-related costs for four trips that the President took to Mar-a-Lago and three trips that the President's adult children made to certain overseas destinations. This report examines (1) the costs incurred by federal agencies associated with the President's travel on selected trips to Mar-a-Lago, (2) the costs incurred by federal agencies associated with certain overseas trips taken by Donald Trump, Jr. and Eric Trump, and (3) the extent to which the Coast Guard, the Secret Service, and DOD have reported their costs pursuant to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976. GAO analyzed agency cost data in connection with the President's travel to Mar-a-Lago and the President's adult children's trips to certain overseas locations. GAO also reviewed the law, agency guidance, and semiannual reports related to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making recommendations to the Secret Service and DOD to ensure that the reports required under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, are prepared and submitted. The Department of Homeland Security and DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-19-178](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov or Diana Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

January 2019

PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL

Secret Service and DOD Need to Ensure That Expenditure Reports Are Prepared and Submitted to Congress

What GAO Found

GAO estimated that federal agencies incurred costs of about \$13.6 million for the President's four trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3 through March 5, 2017. This estimate consisted of approximately \$10.6 million for operating costs of government aircraft and boats and \$3 million for temporary duty costs of government personnel supporting the President's travel, including transportation, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses. These figures do not include certain classified cost information or the salaries and benefits of government personnel traveling with the President because, salaries and benefits would be paid regardless of whether the President was traveling.

Estimated Costs Incurred by Federal Agencies in Support of the President's Four Trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3 – March 5, 2017 (dollars in thousands)

	Operational costs	Temporary duty costs	Total travel costs
Department of Defense	7,499	969	8,468
Department of Homeland Security	3,050	2,022	5,071
Other executive agencies	18	10	29
Total travel costs	10,567	3,001	13,568

Source: GAO analysis of agency data. | GAO-19-178

Note: Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

The United States Secret Service (Secret Service) incurred about \$396,000, primarily for temporary duty costs, while protecting Donald Trump, Jr. and Eric Trump during three international trips taken in January and February 2017. Eric Trump traveled to Uruguay and the Dominican Republic and Donald Trump, Jr., Eric Trump, and their spouses traveled to the United Arab Emirates. Documentation provided by Secret Service officials confirmed that the Trumps and their spouses flew on commercial aircraft. Officials from the 89th Airlift Wing confirmed that no military aircraft supported these trips. Secret Service agents protecting the Trump family flew by commercial aircraft.

GAO found that, of the three agencies required to report by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, only the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard) reported protection costs semiannually to Congress for fiscal years 2015 through 2017. GAO found that the Secret Service does not have a policy for ensuring that the semiannual reports are prepared and has not consistently submitted the reports. Secret Service officials last submitted reports in fiscal year 2015 and were unaware that reports had not been submitted in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 until GAO requested this information. GAO also found that the Department of Defense (DOD) has a policy but did not produce and submit the reports as required. Moreover, weaknesses in DOD's existing policy and instruction do not clearly establish the responsibility for preparing and reporting the costs incurred to support protection activities. Absent clear policies with an oversight mechanism to ensure that the reports are produced, Congress has not been provided required information concerning the costs for providing protective services for the President and others.

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Abbreviations

Coast Guard	United States Coast Guard
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTR	Federal Travel Regulation
GSA	General Services Administration
JTR	Joint Travel Regulations
Secret Service	United States Secret Service

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January 17, 2019

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jackie Speier
House of Representatives

The President of the United States must be ready to travel anywhere in the world on a moment's notice. The President flies on military aircraft provided by the Department of Defense (DOD) on all trips, regardless of the type of travel: official, political, or other non-official purposes. Department of Justice memoranda have advised that when presidential travel is for official purposes it is to be paid for with government funds, and when it is for political purposes, appropriated funds cannot be used. These memoranda also note that even though presidential travel may not be official, there are certain individuals who are required, in the performance of their official duties, to accompany the President when he travels; therefore their costs are to be paid from appropriated funds.¹

The United States Secret Service (Secret Service) is responsible for protecting the President and his family, including the adult children of the

¹See, White House Communications Agency Expenses Incurred on Political or Personal Travel by the President, 14 Op. Off. Legal Counsel 144 (1990); Payment of Expenses Associated with Travel by the President and Vice President, 6 Op. Off. Legal Counsel 214 (1982).

President, unless they decline such protection.² At the request of the Secret Service, assistance must be provided by other agencies, such as DOD and the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard). Under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, the Secret Service does not reimburse DOD or the Coast Guard for assistance provided on a temporary basis when the duties are directly related to the protection of the President, the Vice President, or other officer immediately next in order of succession to the office of the President.³ Otherwise, all assistance that executive departments and agencies provide to the Secret Service in the performance of its duties must be reimbursed by the Secret Service.

We previously reported on certain costs of presidential travel during the administrations of former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.⁴ In 2016, we reported on travel costs for former President Obama for a 2013 trip to Chicago, Illinois, and West Palm Beach, Florida. In 2000, we reported on total aircraft support costs for international trips taken by the President, Vice President, and First Lady from January 1997 through March 2000. Finally, we reported in 1999 on travel costs for former President Clinton for international trips to Africa, Chile, and China.

You requested that we examine costs associated with the President's four trips to the Mar-a-Lago property in Palm Beach, Florida between February 3, 2017 and March 5, 2017, and three international trips taken by Donald Trump, Jr. and Eric Trump in January and February 2017. This report examines

1. the costs incurred by federal agencies associated with the President's travel on selected trips to Mar-a-Lago from February to March 2017;

²18 U.S.C. § 3056. The Presidential Protection Division within the Secret Service is responsible for providing twenty-four hour protection of the President of the United States and other protectees. The Secret Service also provides personnel to staff protective advance assignments for all local, domestic, and international travel. Staff responsible for these assignments assess the overall security environment and implement security procedures to ensure the safety of each protectee.

³Pub. L. No. 94-524, §§ 6, 8, 90 Stat. 2475, 2476 (1976) (as amended) (18 U.S.C. § 3056 note). Referred to in this report as "the Presidential Protection Assistance Act" or "the Act."

⁴GAO, *Presidential Travel: Costs and Accounting for the President's Trips to Africa, Chile, and China*, [GAO/NSIAD-99-164](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 21, 1999); *Presidential Travel: DOD Airlift Cost for White House Foreign Travel*, [GAO/NSIAD-00-209](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 4, 2000); and *Presidential Travel: Estimated Costs for a Specific Presidential Trip to Illinois and Florida*, [GAO-17-24](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 11, 2016).

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2. the costs incurred by federal agencies associated with Donald Trump, Jr.'s and Eric Trump's trips to Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and the United Arab Emirates in January and February 2017; and
 3. the extent to which the Coast Guard, Secret Service, and DOD have reported their costs for protection from fiscal year 2015 to 2017, pursuant to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended.⁵

To address our first objective, we collected and reviewed data on agency assets and personnel used in support of presidential travel that was completed between February 3, 2017 and March 5, 2017.⁶ Specifically, we collected and analyzed operational cost data, including operating hours and estimated operating costs, from the Air Force's 89th Airlift Wing, the 618th Air Operations Center, and Marine Corps Helicopter Squadron One that were related to supporting the presidential airlift requirement, including any supporting vehicles or equipment. We also obtained and analyzed travel cost data, including per diem and other travel expenses, for any Secret Service personnel and military personnel who supported the President's trips. Additionally, we collected and reviewed cost data from agencies directly supporting the Secret Service during the presidential travel completed between February 3, 2017 and March 5, 2017, such as the Coast Guard, Military Working Dog teams, and the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team. We collected and reviewed available travel data, to the extent it was provided to us, to account for the travel costs of government officials on official travel at Mar-a-Lago during the time frame of our audit. Although we collected the major, unclassified travel-related costs that agencies incurred (hereafter referred to as costs), we did not collect travel costs for officials from the Executive Office of the President. Therefore, our totals represent an approximate amount spent

⁵Pub. L. No. 94-524, § 9. Reports are to be submitted to specified congressional committees. The expenditure data required for these reports is not identical to the cost information we obtained for the travel specified in our first two objectives, although some of it may overlap. For example, the Presidential Protection Assistance Act addresses expenditures for all protectees eligible to receive protection by the Secret Service, not just the President.

⁶We report total costs for the four trips the President made between February 3, 2017 and March 5, 2017. These costs also include advance costs incurred by the Secret Service, Coast Guard, and DOD to establish security prior to the President's arrival and necessary costs incurred after the President's departure. We are reporting the costs in aggregate because of the close proximity of the trips. In some cases, we were not able to accurately determine which trip some personnel were supporting based on available documentation. In addition, the Coast Guard left assets in place for the second and third trip to reduce travel costs; therefore we were not able to apportion these costs.

for the four trips. We contacted White House Counsel's Office in April 2017 and January 2018 to solicit information from the Executive Office of the President related to coordinating travel for the President and any costs associated with White House staff traveling with the President. As of January 2019, the White House had not responded to our requests for information. We also did not include certain classified cost information or information about federal funds provided to local law enforcement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As we examined the costs incurred for the President's travel, we did not include the salaries and benefits, including overtime, of U.S. government civilian and military personnel traveling with the President or involved with agency travel preparations, since these personnel would have received their salaries and benefits for the conduct of their regular duties and responsibilities regardless of whether the President traveled.⁷ We reviewed laws, regulations, and policies to identify the rules and processes governing agencies that support presidential travel and agency costs on employee per diem and operational spaces for employees who accompany the President when he is traveling domestically. We also interviewed officials from DOD, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Justice.

To address our second objective, we collected and analyzed cost data from the Secret Service and the Department of State in connection with trips taken by Donald Trump, Jr. and Eric Trump to the Dominican Republic, the United Arab Emirates, and Uruguay. Additionally, we interviewed officials from the Secret Service and the Department of State and reviewed relevant policies and guidance regarding reimbursement for agencies that provide support to the Secret Service. We also obtained documents and interviewed DOD officials concerning whether any DOD aircraft had been used to support these overseas trips.

To address our third objective, we reviewed applicable laws, regulations, and internal Coast Guard, Secret Service, and DOD policies related to the preparation and submission of reports required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act. We also obtained and reviewed available reports from the Coast Guard, Secret Service, and DOD from 2015 through 2017. We selected these three years because they included

⁷The operating cost per hour for Coast Guard boats and aircraft includes a factor for crew salary that we were not able to separate out.

travel conducted in 2017 and they were the most recent years that would have been available at the time of our review. We interviewed officials from the Coast Guard, Secret Service, and DOD regarding the contents and submission of these reports.

As part of this work, we assessed the reliability of DHS and DOD data by interviewing officials to determine what mechanisms were in place to ensure data quality, and we reviewed the data for obvious errors and anomalies. We further conducted manual testing procedures such as reviewing underlying documents for missing data, recreating calculations to ensure that totals were correct, and matching selected cost data to supporting documentation such as credit card statements and travel vouchers. Based on these steps we determined the data to be sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2017 to January 2019 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Agency Support of Presidential Travel

Guidance governing executive agencies' use of government aircraft generally does not apply to aircraft in use by or in support of the President.⁸ Memorandum opinions to the White House from the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel have provided guidance for categorizing expenses associated with official, political, and personal

⁸See, e.g., OMB Circular No. A-126, *Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft* (May 22, 1992) (excepting from its coverage aircraft while in use by or in support of the President or Vice President).

travel by the President or Vice President.⁹ These memoranda provide that certain individuals—such as Secret Service and military aides and support personnel—are required in the performance of their official duties to accompany the President whenever he travels. Further, the official nature of the responsibilities performed by these persons does not change depending upon whether the trip is official, political, or personal and their expenses should generally be paid from public funds.¹⁰

DOD organizations such as the Air Force 89th Air Wing, Presidential Airlift Group, and Marine Helicopter Squadron One provide passenger airlift for presidential travel (fig. 1). The Air Force Air Mobility Command also provides aircraft to move equipment, such as limousines, to support the President's travel. The Military Working Dog Program and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Program support protection of the President while he is on travel by providing explosive detection capabilities.

⁹See e.g. White House Communications Agency Expenses Incurred on Political or Personal Travel by the President, 14 Op. Off. Legal Counsel 144 (1990); Payment of Expenses Associated with Travel by the President and Vice President, 6 Op. Off. Legal Counsel 214 (1982). Previously, we reported that, according to an official in the Executive Office of the President (from a prior administration), although memorandum opinions date back to prior administrations, these memorandum opinions are intended to be general guides for White House staff's decision making about categorizing travel as for official, political, or other non-official purposes. [GAO-17-24](#). As noted above, during this review, we also contacted White House Counsel's Office to solicit current perspectives on these issues, but the White House did not respond to our requests for information.

¹⁰These memoranda do not constitute procedures for planning and executing presidential travel.

Figure 1: Air Force One



Source: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. | GAO-19-178

The Secret Service protects the President through a layered security plan that includes securing locations the President will be visiting, as well as physically screening individuals entering secure areas and conducting background checks on individuals scheduled to be within close proximity to the President, as deemed necessary. Secret Service personnel who support presidential travel include personnel from the Presidential Protection Division and from various headquarters divisions that support protective operations, field offices across the country that provide additional manpower, and the field office with jurisdiction over the location. Additionally, the field office with jurisdiction over the location provides logistical support, additional manpower, regional expertise, and coordinates with state and local law enforcement entities. Consistent with the Presidential Protection Assistance Act, the Secret Service requests support from other agencies—including the Coast Guard and DOD—as necessary when the President travels.

The Coast Guard primarily secures the waterways in support of protecting the President, family members, and other designated protectees, as necessary. Specifically, when requested by the Secret Service, the Coast Guard will enforce security zones and provide air intercept capabilities for protectees. Local assets are used to the extent that they are available. However, the Coast Guard can request additional support from Coast Guard assets across the nation to meet the security demand.

Costs Related to Presidential Travel

Costs related to presidential travel fall into two primary categories:

- *Operational costs* include costs for assets used to transport or provide protection for the President or spaces used for operational purposes. These include costs for government aircraft and vehicles, such as Air Force One, Marine One, airlift, patrol boats, and hotel rooms used as command centers.¹¹
- *Temporary duty costs* are costs incurred for personnel who are traveling on official business.¹² These costs include those for transportation, lodging, meals and incidental expenses and other travel-related expenses for personnel supporting the President's trips.¹³ They also include travel-related expenses for personnel who operate the government aircraft and vehicles used to support the President's trips and Secret Service agents who provide protection. They include the costs for additional personnel who provide bomb detection and disposal capability—military working dog teams and explosive ordinance disposal teams—and support personnel from the White House Military Office, the White House Communications Agency, and the White House Transportation Agency.

Two regulations implement statutory requirements and executive branch policies for travel, allowing agencies to pay for or reimburse their employees' per diem expenses (lodging, meals, and incidentals expenses) and other travel-related expenses:

¹¹We did not include classified costs and did not include costs associated with salaries and benefits for Secret Service and DOD personnel. The operating cost per hour for Coast Guard boats and aircraft includes a factor for crew salary that we were not able to separate out.

¹²See FTR § 301-1.3 (explaining when employees are eligible for temporary duty allowances) and JTR 0301 (explaining routine temporary duty travel). The Secret Service may pay per diem expenses of employees who are on protective missions, whether at or away from their duty stations. Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017, Pub. L. No. 115-31, div. F, tit. II, 131 Stat. 135, 410; Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-141, div. F, tit. II.

¹³Meals and incidental expenses include a set daily (or per diem) amount to cover the cost of meals, including taxes and tips, as well as fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, hotel staff, and staff on ships. Other travel-related expenses include such things as baggage fees, internet fees, taxi fares, and parking.

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- **The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)**, issued by the General Services Administration (GSA), applies to Secret Service personnel.¹⁴
 - **The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR)**, issued by the Department of Defense, apply to DOD personnel.¹⁵

Both regulations allow agencies to pay for employees' daily expenses when they travel, based on allowances set by GSA for the applicable location and date (per diem rates) or the actual expense of travel.¹⁶ Under the FTR, the maximum amount that a civilian employee may be reimbursed is 300 percent of the applicable per diem rate.¹⁷ The JTR allows uniformed service members to be reimbursed up to 300 percent when they travel in the continental United States, but they can be reimbursed more than 300 percent of the per diem rate for lodging when they travel outside the continental United States.¹⁸

Costs for each presidential trip may vary, because each trip is unique. Costs associated with each trip can be influenced by a number of factors, mainly the location, number of protectees, foreign visitors, time of year, the protectee's schedule of events, and the airlift requirements—including

¹⁴The FTR, issued by the General Services Administration, applies to most federal employees. See 5 U.S.C. § 5707 (authorizing the General Services Administration to issue travel regulations). The FTR is found at 41 C.F.R. chs. 300-304. Following the time frame for the trips that we reviewed, on May 5, 2017, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 provided authority to the Secret Service to pay per diem travel expenses (i.e., lodging and meals and incidental expenses) of employees on protective missions without regard to the General Services Administration's reimbursement rates for federal employee travel. Pub. L. No. 115-31, div. F., tit. II. This language also appears in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-141, div. F., tit. II.

¹⁵The JTR, issued by DOD, are applicable to uniformed service members and DOD civilian employees (referred to as DOD personnel in this report). For DOD civilian employees, the JTR incorporates elements of the FTR and regulate per diem and travel allowances, among other things.

¹⁶FTR pt. 301-11; JTR 020301, 020307, 0318. Payment under the actual expense method is permitted for a variety of reasons, such as costs escalating due to special events (e.g., sporting events or disasters) or because of mission requirements. FTR § 301-11.300; JTR 020307. The General Services Administration sets per diem rates for travel within the continental United States, DOD establishes per diem rates for overseas non-foreign areas, and the Department of State does so for foreign overseas locations. The General Services Administration per diem rate for the West Palm Beach area, which includes Mar-a-Lago, from January 2017 to March 2017, was \$182 for lodging and \$59 for meals and incidental expenses.

¹⁷FTR §§ 301-11.30(a), 301-11.303, 301-11.305.

¹⁸JTR 020307.

the originating location of airlift flights. The combination of these factors can increase or decrease the cost to transport and protect the President. Specifically, an increase in the number of protectees, including foreign dignitaries, would require the Secret Service to deploy additional personnel to support its protective operations.

Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976

The Presidential Protection Assistance Act establishes procedures and reporting requirements for protective services provided by the Secret Service. The primary aim of the legislation was to strengthen control over costs for protective services, particularly at non-governmental properties, by centralizing in the Secret Service authority and accountability for such costs.¹⁹ The Act continues the authority of executive departments and agencies to assist the Secret Service in meeting its protective responsibilities but specifies that protective services may only be provided at the request of the Secret Service and must be on a reimbursable basis except when temporary support is provided by DOD and the Coast Guard and is directly related to protecting the President, Vice President, or an officer immediately next in the order of succession to the office of the President. The Act further requires that the Secret Service, DOD, and the Coast Guard submit semiannual reports in March and September to six congressional committees on expenditures pursuant to the Act.

Costs for the President's Travel for Four Trips to Mar-a-Lago Totaled about \$13.6 Million

For the President's four trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3, 2017 to March 5, 2017, we estimate that federal agencies incurred costs of about \$13.6 million. As shown in table 1, these costs consisted of approximately \$10.6 million for operating costs and \$3.0 million for temporary duty costs. DOD and DHS incurred the majority of these costs—about \$8.5 million and \$5.1 million, respectively. As previously mentioned, these figures do not include certain classified cost information. Moreover, they do not include the salaries and benefits of U.S. government civilian and military personnel traveling with the President or involved with agency travel preparations, because these personnel would have received their salaries

¹⁹Among other things, the Act authorizes the Secret Service to provide security on a permanent basis at one non-governmental property designated by a protectee and also places a limitation on the expenditure of funds for maintaining a permanent guard detail or for permanent facilities, equipment, or services to secure a non-governmental property in addition to the designated property; these expenditures cannot exceed \$200,000 per property, unless specifically approved by resolutions adopted by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Pub. L. No. 94-524, §§ 3-4 (as amended).

and benefits for the conduct of their regular duties and responsibilities regardless of whether the President traveled.

We identified about \$60,000 in expenses paid to Mar-a-Lago for these four trips.²⁰ DOD lodging expenses of about \$24,000 were within GSA limits of 300 percent of the per diem rate. DHS expenses of about \$36,000 were for space required by the Secret Service for operational purposes. The legal authorities that the Secret Service relied on to pay for these kinds of rooms do not limit how much the agency can pay; however, none of the rooms used to meet operational security standards exceeded the maximum allowed under the FTR's actual expense reimbursement method.²¹

²⁰We were not able to identify meals and incidental expenses, if any, that may have been incurred at the Mar-a-Lago club. DHS and DOD employees on these trips were reimbursed for meals and incidental expenses in accordance with General Services Administration per diem rates, which is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses. Applicable travel regulations do not require them to submit receipts for reimbursement of individual expenses under \$75.

²¹The FTR provides that payment for miscellaneous expenses—including the hire of a conference center or a hotel room for official business—may be made when authorized by the agency and under the agency's governing policy. FTR §§ 301-12.1, 301-70.301. In addition, according to the Secret Service Counsel, the Secret Service had relied on a 1982 GAO decision that provides that an agency may rent accommodations that cost more than applicable limitations where (a) use of the particular accommodations is an integral part of the employee's job assignment, and (b) failure to provide such accommodations would frustrate the ability of the Agency to carry out its statutory mandate. [B-209375](#), Dec. 7, 1982. By statute, GAO's authority to adjudicate these kinds of claims as they relate to lodging rooms was transferred to GSA, among other agencies, in 1996. Following the time frame for the trips that we reviewed, on May 5, 2017, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 provided authority to the Secret Service to pay per diem travel expenses of employees on protective missions without regard to GSA's reimbursement rates. Pub. L. No. 115-31, 131 Stat. at 410. Therefore, since May 2017, the Secret Service has not been subject to regulatory caps on room rental, regardless of the purpose of the room.

Table 1: Estimated Costs Incurred by Federal Agencies in Support of the President's Four Trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3 – March 5, 2017

Figures are in thousands of fiscal year 2017 dollars

	Operational costs ^a	Temporary duty costs ^b	Total travel costs
Department of Defense	7,499	969	8,468
Department of Homeland Security	3,050	2,022	5,071
Other agency travel^c	18	10	29
Total travel costs	10,567	3,001	13,568

Source: GAO analysis of agency data. | GAO-19-178

Notes: Total costs exclude classified costs. Personnel salaries and benefits are not included in these figures because they would have been paid regardless of whether the President traveled. Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

^aOperational costs include (1) costs for the operating government owned aircraft that we estimated by using the average cost per flight hour and the actual flight hours for each specific aircraft type as reported by the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; (2) costs for operating government owned boats that we estimated by using the average cost per operating hour and the actual hours used for each specific boat type as reported by the Coast Guard; and (3) expenses incurred for operational space and equipment rentals (i.e. golf carts, tents, lighting, generators, etc.) as reported by the Secret Service.

^bTemporary duty costs include expenses incurred for commercial airfare, lodging, meals and incidental expenses, and other related expenses such as rental vehicles, gas for rental vehicles, and baggage fees.

^cOther agency travel information includes information from the Departments of Justice and State to account for travel costs for Cabinet members on official travel, their supporting staff, and agency staff directly supporting the President's travel to Mar-a-Lago.

Costs Incurred by DOD

DOD incurred an estimated \$8.5 million in costs to provide support for the President's four trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3, 2017 to March 5, 2017, as shown in table 2 below. The majority of these costs were operational costs for DOD assets, specifically, for operating Air Force One and Marine Corps One to transport the President, as well as airlift support from the Air Mobility Command.

Table 2: Estimated DOD Costs Incurred in Support of the President’s Four Trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3 – March 5, 2017

Figures are in thousands of fiscal year 2017 dollars

	Operational costs ^a	Temporary duty costs ^b	Total travel costs
Department of Defense (DOD)			
Air Mobility Command	3,202	-	3,202
89th Air Wing	4,239	131	4,369
U.S. Marine Corps	24	206	230
Military working dog program	-	124	124
Explosive ordnance disposal	-	239	239
White House Military Office	35	269	304
DOD subtotal	7,499	969	8,468

Source: GAO analysis of DOD data. | GAO-19-178

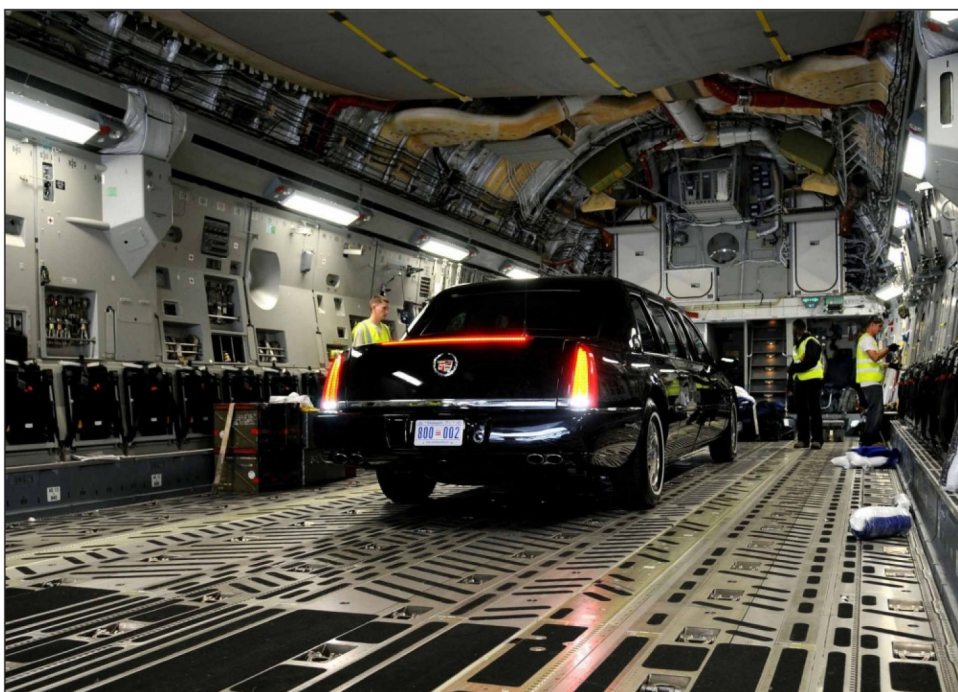
Notes: Costs exclude classified information. Personnel salaries and benefits are not included in these figures because they would have been paid regardless of whether the President traveled. “-” indicates categories for which no related costs could be identified. Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

^aOperational costs include costs for the operating government owned aircraft that we estimated by using the average cost per flight hour and the actual flight hours for each specific aircraft type, as reported by the Air Force and Marine Corps.

^bTemporary duty costs include expenses incurred for commercial airfare, lodging, meals and incidental expenses, and other related expenses such as rental vehicles, gas for rental vehicles, and baggage fees.

Table 2 shows the estimated costs incurred by DOD for these trips. The cost per flying hour for military aircraft is a significant cost driver that affects the overall costs of any presidential travel. These costs are predominately borne by the Air Force and the Marine Corps, because they operate the aircraft used by the President. Generally, Air Force One costs represent the operating costs to fly the President from Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, to Palm Beach, Florida. Similarly, the Marine Corps One costs represent the operating costs to fly the President between the White House and Joint Base Andrews. For the airlift support requirements, the Air Mobility Command used aircraft departing from various U.S. Air Force bases. These aircraft arrived at Joint Base Andrews or Marine Corps Base Quantico to transport Secret Service personnel and vehicles and Marine Corps personnel and helicopters to support the trip before returning to their air base of origin (see fig. 2).

Figure 2: Presidential Limousine Loaded for Transport.



Source: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. | GAO-19-178

DOD also incurred temporary duty costs for DOD personnel who supported these trips, including the travel associated with the aircrews and support personnel for Air Force One and Marine Corps One. Each of the military services also provided military working dog teams (see fig. 3) and explosive ordnance disposal teams to provide explosive detection and disposal capabilities and to perform patrol functions.

Figure 3: Military Working Dog and Handler on Duty



Source: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. | GAO-19-178

Finally, personnel from the White House Military Office incurred travel expenses associated with the President's trips.²² For these four trips, the majority of DOD personnel stayed at nearby hotels with rooms at the GSA rate or within 300 percent of the GSA per diem rate, as required by the FTR and JTR. DOD paid \$24,414.70 to Mar-a-Lago for lodging expenses for DOD personnel.²³ We reviewed lodging receipts and confirmed that these payments were within 300 percent of the GSA per diem rate.

Costs Incurred by DHS

DHS incurred an estimated \$5.1 million in costs to provide support for the President's four trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3, 2017 to March 5, 2017. Of this figure, the Secret Service incurred about \$1.6 million to

²²Personnel from the White House Communications Agency and the White House Transportation Agency—components of the White House Military Office—participated in these trips.

²³According to White House Military Office officials, the common areas of this lodging space were used for operational purposes.

provide support. This included per diem and other related travel expenses, such as commercial airfare or use of rental cars for officials traveling in advance of the President. We identified about \$35,750 in expenses for operational space at Mar-a-Lago for these four trips. Table 3 shows the estimated costs incurred by the Secret Service and the Coast Guard for these trips.

Table 3: Estimated DHS Costs Incurred in Support of the President’s Four Trips to Mar-a-Lago from February 3 – March 5, 2017

Figures are in thousands of fiscal year 2017 dollars

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	Operational costs ^a	Temporary duty costs ^b	Total travel costs
U.S. Secret Service	94	1,549	1,643
U.S. Coast Guard	2,956	467	3,422
Secretary of DHS	-	6	6
DHS subtotal	3,050	2,022	5,071

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data. | GAO-19-178

Notes: Personnel salaries and benefits are not included in these figures because they would have been paid regardless of whether the President traveled.

^aOperational costs include (1) costs for the operating government owned aircraft that we estimated by using the average cost per flight hour and the actual flight hours for each specific aircraft type, as reported by the Coast Guard; (2) costs for operating government-owned boats that we estimated by using the average cost per operating hour and the actual hours used for each specific boat type, as reported by the Coast Guard; and (3) expenses incurred for operational space and equipment rentals (i.e. golf carts, tents, lighting, generators, etc.), as reported by the Secret Service.

^bTemporary duty costs include expenses incurred for commercial airfare, lodging, meals and incidental expenses, and other related expenses such as rental vehicles, gas for rental vehicles, and baggage fees.

Secret Service’s Costs and Resources

The majority of costs incurred by the Secret Service were temporary duty costs associated with travel to protect the President. The number of agents assigned to the protective detail for each trip varied based on the number of protectees present (including foreign dignitaries) and unrelated events at the same location.

To execute the four trips, the Secret Service leveraged support from across the agency and field offices across the country to implement protective operations for the President’s travel. Agents were assigned as

- part of the protective detail—providing twenty-four hour protection for the President or other protectee;
- members of the advance team—determining and implementing the security plan for the site; or

-
- on-site support throughout the duration of the visit.

For example, agents from the Secret Service's Presidential Protective Division, Uniformed Division, and Technical Security Division, among others, traveled in advance of the President to assess the location and develop and implement a security plan. Further, agents from Secret Service field offices across the country provided additional manpower at Mar-a-Lago and supported the Presidential Protection Division within the Office of Protective Operations—which holds primary responsibility for the daily protection of the President—in ensuring that the location remained safe for the President and other protectees.

The majority of agents who supported the four trips during our time frame did not stay at Mar-a-Lago.²⁴ The Secret Service booked a limited number of rooms around the President to meet operational security requirements.²⁵ According to officials, these rooms allowed the Secret Service to provide 360-degree protection around the President. For these four trips, most Secret Service agents stayed at nearby hotels at which rooms were at the GSA lodging rate or within 300 percent of the GSA per diem rate, consistent with the FTR.

Coast Guard's Costs and Resources

The Coast Guard incurred about \$3.4 million in costs to provide support for the four trips to Mar-a-Lago. The majority of these costs were operational costs for Coast Guard assets, specifically, the use of small response boats, special purpose law enforcement boats, deployable rotary wing aircraft, and marine protection-class cutters to provide support in waterways near Mar-a-Lago (see fig. 4). For the Coast Guard, operating costs are determined by the type of boat or aircraft used and the hourly operating costs.²⁶

²⁴Agents traveling from outside of the local area generally incurred costs associated with transportation (i.e., flights), meals, incidentals, and lodging during their assignment. Agents from regional field offices who provided support did not incur transportation costs (other than rental cars, for example) but did incur costs associated with meals, incidentals, and lodging during their assignment.

²⁵During the four trips discussed in our review, Secret Service personnel incurred expenses for operational purposes at Mar-a-Lago of about \$35,750.

²⁶The Coast Guard's operating cost calculations include direct costs (labor, fuel, maintenance, etc.); support costs; and general and administrative costs.

Figure 4: Coast Guard Response Boat on Patrol



Source: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. | GAO-19-178

According to Coast Guard officials, to the extent possible, they request support from assets that they determine are within close proximity to the travel location. For the four Mar-a-Lago trips, support was requested from the local Miami sector, Kings Bay (Georgia), New Orleans (Louisiana), Houston (Texas), Boston (Massachusetts), and New York (New York).

The Coast Guard incurred other travel-related costs, such as for meals and incidental expenses and lodging for officials on temporary duty assignment to support the President's travel. Coast Guard officials noted that, if possible, personnel are to stay on the asset (for example a boat); however, if this is not possible, they are to stay in nearby lodging at or within 300 percent of the GSA per diem rate. Coast Guard officials

confirmed that personnel supporting presidential travel for these four trips did not stay at Mar-a-Lago.²⁷

Costs for the Secretary of Homeland Security's Travel

The Department of Homeland Security incurred costs of about \$6,000 in connection with the Secretary of Homeland Security and staff's travel to Mar-a-Lago on March 4, 2017. Costs included transportation to and from Mar-a-Lago and per diem expenses (meals and incidental expenses). According to DHS officials, agents supporting the protection of the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security were multi-staffed and protected other protectees at the same time. Therefore, travel costs for personnel associated with the Secretary's protective detail are captured in the overall travel costs for this trip. No lodging costs were incurred at Mar-a-Lago in connection with the Secretary of Homeland Security's travel.

Additional Costs by Other Agencies for Official Travel

The Department of Justice and the Department of State incurred costs of about \$29,000 for official travel to Mar-a-Lago during these four trips.²⁸ The Department of Justice incurred costs of about \$18,000 to transport the Attorney General, his Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) detail, and three Department of Justice personnel to Mar-a-Lago for one trip. The operational costs were for the FBI Gulfstream 550 used to transport the officials from the Washington, D.C. area to West Palm Beach, Florida and back.²⁹ The Department of Justice provided documentation that no Department of Justice or FBI personnel had per diem expenses, since the

²⁷The costs for one room at Mar-a-Lago during the scope of this engagement were not incurred as part of Coast Guard presidential security support. These costs were incurred by a Coast Guard member who was assigned to the National Security Council staff. As stated earlier, we do not otherwise have cost information associated with White House staff.

²⁸Official travel is defined as travel to meet mission requirements, required use travel, and other travel for the conduct of agency business.

²⁹Certain high-level government officials, such as the Attorney General and the FBI Director, are presidentially designated as "required use travelers" for all of their travel and thus travel aboard Department of Justice or other government aircraft, including for personal purposes, even though it may be more costly than the price of comparable common carrier flights. Required use is travel by an executive agency officer or employee, where the use of government aircraft is required for bona fide communications or security needs of the agency or exceptional scheduling requirements. Agencies may also designate officials as required use travelers on a trip-by-trip basis. OMB Circular A-126(5)(d); FTR § 300-3.1.

trip was less than 12 hours.³⁰ In addition, the Department of State incurred costs of about \$10,000 to provide interpreter support and protocol officials associated with the President's trip to Mar-a-Lago in February 2017 when the Prime Minister of Japan was a guest.³¹

Costs for the President's Two Adult Children's Travel to Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, and the United Arab Emirates Totaled about \$396,000

The Secret Service incurred costs of approximately \$396,000, primarily for Secret Service agents' temporary duty costs, while protecting Donald Trump, Jr., Eric Trump, and their spouses during three international trips taken during January and February 2017, as shown in table 4 below. Eric Trump traveled to Uruguay from January 3, 2017 to January 5, 2017 and the Dominican Republic from February 2, 2017 to February 3, 2017. Donald Trump, Jr., Eric Trump, and their spouses traveled to the United Arab Emirates from February 14, 2017 to February 19, 2017. The Secret Service protects presidential family members domestically and internationally. Children of the President with a protective detail are required to receive protection twenty-four hours a day, and agents who are part of their detail travel with them wherever they go.³²

³⁰FTR § 301-11.1 provides that federal employees are eligible for per diem or actual expenses when, among other requirements, they are in a travel status for more than 12 hours.

³¹Department of State costs include the contract cost for one translator and the temporary duty costs associated with an additional Department of State translator and personnel from the Chief of Protocol's office that supported the trip. Based on our review of available documents, Department of State personnel did not incur lodging costs at Mar-a-Lago for this trip.

³²Children of the President, known as First Children, ages 16 and over can decline protection.

Table 4: Costs Incurred by the U.S. Secret Service to Support Trips by the President’s Two Adult Children

Figures are in thousands of fiscal year 2017 dollars

	Operational costs ^a	Temporary duty costs ^b	Total travel costs ^c
Uruguay	9	146	156
Dominican Republic	4	26	30
United Arab Emirates	18	192	211
Total	31	364	396

Source: GAO analysis of Secret Service and State Department data. | GAO-19-178

Note: Personnel salaries and benefits are generally not included in these figures because they would have been paid regardless of whether the adult children traveled. However, salaries for foreign national employees are included because the Secret Service reimbursed the State Department for these costs. Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding.

^aOperational costs include the cost of government vehicles, other support equipment, and foreign national employees provided by the State Department. According to officials from the 89th Airlift Wing, no military aircraft were used to support these trips.

^bTemporary duty costs include expenses incurred by government officials for commercial airfare, lodging, meals and incidental expenses, and other related expenses such as rental vehicles, gas for rental vehicles, and baggage fees.

^cAccording to Secret Service and State Department officials, the costs incurred by the State Department are reimbursed by the Secret Service in accordance with the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-524, 90 Stat. 2475-77 (1976) (as amended) (18 U.S.C. § 3056 note). The Secret Service reimbursed the State Department a total of about \$217,000 for the three trips.

For international travel, because there are no local Secret Service field offices in most countries, the Department of State supports the Secret Service by booking and paying for all hotel reservations required by Secret Service and State Department personnel and coordinating onsite needs.³³ This includes, but is not limited to, acquiring rental cars, phones, and interpreters at the trip’s destination. Transportation for individuals in foreign offices is booked in a variety of ways. For example, agents may book their own flights, flights may be booked by a contracted agency, or sometimes the local embassy may assist in booking transportation. Meals and incidental expenses are reimbursed to the traveler.³⁴ The Secret Service and the Department of State have implemented a memorandum

³³The Secret Service has international field offices in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, among others. Agents from the Rome, Italy office supported the trip to the United Arab Emirates.

³⁴During the time frame for the three international trips, the maximum per diem rate was \$389 for Uruguay, \$276 for the Dominican Republic, and \$553 for the United Arab Emirates. These amounts include allowances for lodging and meals and incidental expenses.

of understanding detailing their respective roles and responsibilities and, as required by law, the Secret Service is to reimburse the Department of State for all costs incurred in support of the Secret Service's protective operations.³⁵

Documentation provided by the Secret Service confirmed that Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump and their spouses flew on commercial aircraft. Officials from the 89th Airlift Wing confirmed that no military aircraft supported these trips. Secret Service agents protecting the Trump family flew by commercial aircraft.³⁶ Additionally, reimbursement documentation provided by both the State Department and the Secret Service confirmed that no costs were incurred for chartered air travel.

As with all protective missions, Secret Service officials noted that the number of agents assigned to the detail depended on the number of protectees and the threat environment, among other things. The trips to the Dominican Republic and Uruguay each included only one protectee, and the trip to the United Arab Emirates included four protectees.

³⁵Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-524, §§ 6, 8. Operational costs incurred by the State Department include providing government vehicles, gas and oil, office equipment, and cell phone rentals, among other things. The Secret Service reimbursed the State Department a total of about \$217,000 for the three trips. This included \$111,000 for the trip to Uruguay, \$12,000 for the trip to the Dominican Republic, and \$94,000 for the trip to the United Arab Emirates.

³⁶Commercial air transportation expenses incurred were for agents flying as part of a protective detail.

Secret Service and DOD Have Not Reported Costs as Required Under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976

For fiscal years 2015 through 2017 we found that, of the three agencies required to report costs incurred for protecting the President and others under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act, only the Coast Guard reported semiannually on costs under the Act.³⁷ The Secret Service did not do so consistently, and DOD did not report any protection costs during this time frame.

Coast Guard: The Coast Guard submitted the semiannual reports required under the Act for fiscal years 2015 through 2017. To facilitate complying with the Presidential Protection Assistance Act, the Coast Guard developed and implemented a policy for preparing the semiannual reports to Congress. The policy contains business rules identifying what information is to be collected and by whom, who is responsible for compiling the information, and time frames for when the information is to be submitted internally. For example, the Coast Guard operationalized collection of this information by requiring a form to be used when collecting information related to protective details for the Vice President and the President. Its internal policy and additional guidance also require that information be submitted internally no more than 14 days after each event and validated no more than 30 days after each event.³⁸ According to agency officials, these business rules and forms are published and provided to all Coast Guard field units, and quarterly reminders about completing the forms are disseminated via email.

Secret Service: The Secret Service has not consistently submitted the semiannual reports to Congress and does not have a policy for ensuring that the semiannual reports are prepared. Specifically, we found that the Secret Service submitted semiannual reports to Congress in 2015 but had not submitted semiannual reports for fiscal years 2016 and 2017. The Secret Service notified us that it was compiling and submitting reports for

³⁷The Presidential Protection Assistance Act requires the Secret Service, Coast Guard, and DOD to submit a detailed semiannual report of expenditures made under the Act for the 6-month period preceding the report to the Committees on Appropriations, Committees on the Judiciary, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on March 31 and September 30 of each year. Pub. L. No. 94-524, § 9. In May 1978, we reviewed fiscal year 1977 reports submitted by the Secret Service, the Coast Guard, and DOD and determined that there were several problems with the Act's implementation. See GAO, *Review of the Reimbursement and Reporting Requirement of the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976*, GGD-78-75 (Washington, D.C.: May. 22, 1978).

³⁸*Employment of Coast Guard Resources in Support of the United States Secret Service and Other Protective Details*, COMDTINST 16202.7A, (September 29, 2015).

fiscal year 2017 after we had brought the reporting requirement to officials' attention during the course of our review. Secret Service officials told us that they were unaware that the reports for 2016 and 2017 had not been submitted until we requested this information.

According to Secret Service officials, the division that is responsible for preparing and submitting the reports to Congress experienced a transition in leadership during the period when there was the lapse in reporting. Specifically, management and the personnel responsible for preparing and submitting the reports to Congress were no longer with the agency in 2016 and therefore could not brief incoming management hired in 2017. According to officials, this contributed to a reporting lapse. *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that management should implement control activities through policies, for example, by documenting responsibilities for each unit.³⁹ Control activities are the policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that enforce management's directives to achieve the entity's objectives. Further, management should also define objectives clearly to enable the identification of risks and define risk tolerances. This would include defining objectives in specific terms so they are understood at all levels and can be carried out without regard to personnel changes. This further involves clearly defining what is to be achieved, who is to achieve it, how it will be achieved, and the time frames for realizing the achievement. Establishing a policy defining requirements for producing the semiannual reports to Congress—including what is to be reported, the entity responsible for preparing and submitting the reports, and reporting time frames—and an oversight mechanism to ensure that the reports are prepared and submitted to Congress, may better position the Secret Service to consistently report required expenditure data to specified congressional committees as required.

DOD: DOD has issued a policy related to collecting information on its support for the Secret Service's protective duties but has not produced and submitted the required reports to Congress in accordance with its policy.⁴⁰ DOD officials were unaware that the reports had not been

³⁹GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C., September 2014).

⁴⁰*Department of Defense Directive 3025.13 – Employment of DOD Capabilities in Support of the U.S. Secret Service (USSS)*, Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (Oct. 10, 2010); and *Department of Defense Instruction 3025.19 - Procedures for Sharing Information with and Providing Support to the U.S. Secret Service*, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), (Nov. 29, 2011; change 1 Mar. 13, 2017).

submitted until we requested them. According to DOD officials, the reports were not submitted as a result of an administrative oversight, and they could not determine when the reports had last been submitted.

This situation is in part the result of weaknesses in DOD's existing policy and implementing instruction with regard to specific information that could help ensure the reports are consistently produced and provided to Congress. For example, the policy requires that any DOD organization incurring costs associated with support provided to the Secret Service collect and report the costs to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Chief Financial Officer. However, neither the policy nor underlying instruction sets forth time frames for internal or external reporting to ensure that the semiannual dates are met. Further, DOD has no mechanism for ensuring that the required information is submitted to Congress.

As previously noted, internal control standards require that management should implement control activities through policies and define objectives clearly to enable the identification of risks and define risk tolerances. This involves clearly defining what is to be achieved, who is to achieve it, how it will be achieved, and the time frames for realizing the achievement. Moreover, the policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that enforce management's directives to achieve the entity's objectives are to be defined.

According to a DOD official, in March 2018 the department began efforts to gather the information necessary to prepare the required report. However, collecting the information has been challenging, largely due to the multiple data sources and inconsistent methods for capturing the data to date. Therefore, according to DOD officials, once the department completes its initial data collection effort, officials plan to assess the adequacy of the data and review DOD's existing guidance to identify revisions needed to ensure that future reports are submitted in accordance with Presidential Protection Assistance Act. However, the agency has not yet defined the steps necessary to fulfill near-term reporting requirements under the Act, or time frames for doing so. By addressing these issues, DOD could be better positioned to comply with the law.

Further, while DOD officials anticipate updating the policy and instruction at a future date, steps and time frames for completing the update have not yet been defined, and it is unclear when or whether the updates will

occur. Updating DOD's policy and instruction to specify the requirements and establish an oversight mechanism may better position DOD to report expenditure data to Congress, as required, on a semiannual basis and enhance visibility over the costs associated with providing protective services, in particular in relation to protection at nongovernmental properties.

Conclusions

The Secret Service, with help from the Coast Guard and DOD, plays a vital role in protecting the President during his travels. The Presidential Protection Assistance Act was intended to establish procedures to control the expenditure of federal funds for protection at nongovernmental properties; it requires that each of these entities report expenditures under the Act. The Secret Service, the Coast Guard, and DOD have all incurred costs related to protection for the President and others. However, information on such costs is limited, because only the Coast Guard has been reporting them. As a result, Congress lacks information about the amounts that DOD and the Secret Service have expended for providing protection—including providing protection at nongovernmental properties. This limits congressional efforts to ensure accountability for these costs. The Secret Service does not have a policy in place that defines and enforces reporting requirements, and DOD's policy and underlying instruction lack important details such as time frames for reporting expenditures and a mechanism for ensuring that the required information is submitted to Congress. DOD has initiated steps to develop required reports but has not identified the specific steps it will take and the time frames within which these efforts will be completed.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making one recommendation to the Director of the Secret Service and two to the Secretary of Defense.

The Director of the Secret Service should establish a policy defining requirements for producing the semiannual reports of expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, and an oversight mechanism to ensure that the Secret Service consistently submits these reports to specified congressional committees. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy updates its policy and instruction on providing support to the Secret Service to define the requirements for producing semiannual reports of expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance

Act of 1976, as amended. These requirements should, at a minimum, include (1) the steps and time frames for completing updates to the policy and instruction, (2) time frames for reporting the expenditures, and (3) an oversight mechanism to ensure that the Department of Defense consistently submits these reports to specified congressional committees. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy defines the steps, including time frames, necessary to achieve near term reporting requirements under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, and submit the reports as required. (Recommendation 3)

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report for review and comment to the Executive Office of the President, and the Departments of Homeland Security, Defense, Justice, and State. DHS and DOD provided written comments, which are reproduced in appendixes I and II respectively. In their comments, DHS and DOD concurred with their respective recommendation(s).

DHS concurred with our first recommendation, which called for the Secret Service to establish a policy defining requirements for producing the semiannual reports of expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, and an oversight mechanism to ensure the Secret Service consistently submits these reports to specified congressional committees. Specifically, the Secret Service has recently updated several guidance documents related to the Act. It further plans to publish a directive during fiscal year 2019 documenting the requirements for producing the semiannual reports and defining the oversight mechanism to ensure that the reports are consistently submitted.

DOD concurred with our second recommendation, which called for DOD to update its policy and instruction on providing support to the Secret Service to define the requirements for producing semiannual reports of the expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended.

DOD concurred with our recommendation that DOD define the steps, including time frames, necessary to achieve near term reporting requirements under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, and submit the reports as required.

DHS and DOJ also provided technical comments, which we incorporated into the report as appropriate.

The Department of State and the Executive Office of the President had no comments.

As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies to the Executive Office of the President; the Secretary of Homeland Security; the Director of the Secret Service; the Commandant of the Coast Guard; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force; the Commandant of the Marine Corps; the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Secretary of State; and the Attorney General.

Consistent with section 10 of the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, this report is also being sent the Committees on Appropriations and on the Judiciary, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.⁴¹

In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

⁴¹ Pub. L. No. 94-524, § 10.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov or Diana Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.



Brian J. Lepore
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management



Diana Maurer
Director
Homeland Security and Justice

Appendix I: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

November 28, 2018

Brian J. Lepore
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Diana Maurer
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management Response to Draft Report GAO-19-178, "PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL: Secret Service and DOD Need to Ensure Expenditure Reports Are Prepared and Submitted to Congress"

Dear Mr. Lepore and Ms. Maurer:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note GAO's recognition of the vital role the Secret Service has, with help from the Coast Guard and Department of Defense, in protecting the President and others during their travels. Due to a leadership transition in 2016, the Secret Service has not reported its expenditures pursuant to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976 (PPAA) since 2015. However, once the Secret Service became aware of the reporting lapse, the agency took immediate action to reconcile all prior costs and is in the process of compiling and submitting all outstanding reports. Additionally, the Secret Service will develop a policy defining requirements for producing the semiannual reports, including what is to be reported, the entity responsible for preparing and submitting the reports, and reporting timeframes to prevent any reoccurrence of this

situation. The Secret Service is committed to being transparent and timely in meeting Congressional reporting requirements pursuant to the PPAA.

Finally, it is important to note that the \$200,000 limit referenced in footnote 19 of GAO's draft report has presented significant challenges to effectively and efficiently accomplishing the Secret Service protective mission. Congress has twice taken initial steps to provide the relief necessary to ensure the protection of all former presidents (see Secret Service Improvements Act of 2015, H.R. 1656, 114th Cong. § 11 (2015 (passed by the House of Representatives)); and the Secret Service Reauthorization Act of 2017, H.R. 2605, 115th Cong. § 11 (2017 (introduced in the House of Representatives))). We encourage Congress to consider modernizing the PPAA in light of the current realities and the anticipated circumstances in which the Secret Service must operate.

The draft report contained three recommendations, including one for the Secret Service with which the Department concurs. Attached find our detailed response to this recommendation. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,



JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Attachment

**Attachment: Management Response to the Recommendation
Contained in GAO-19-178**

GAO recommended that the Director of United States Secret Service:

Recommendation 1: Establish a policy defining requirements for producing the semiannual reports of expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, and an oversight mechanism to ensure the Secret Service consistently submits these reports to specified congressional committees.

Response: Concur. In July 2018, the Secret Service, Office of Strategic Planning and Policy and the Office of Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) updated two directives, AOD-08(01), "Request For Space, Alterations, Equipment and Services at Locations Designated as Residential Protective Sites," and AOD-08(02), "Procedures for the SSF 1996, Designation Of Non-Governmental Property To Be Secured By the United States Secret Service," addressing documentation of expenditures in compliance with the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976. In addition, a corresponding Delegation of Authority, No. 48, Revision 2, "Permanent Assistance from Other Federal Departments and Agencies," was updated on November 19, 2018. These materials will be referenced in a forthcoming OCFO directive to be published during FY 2019 documenting the requirements for producing the semiannual reports of expenditures, and defining an oversight mechanism to ensure the Secret Service consistently submits these reports to specified congressional committees.

Upon issuance of the directive and in coordination with the Office of Protective Operations, the OCFO will develop desk procedures addressing the financial management processes to be followed in preparing, coordinating, and submitting the semi-annual report in compliance with the PPAA. Estimated Completion Date: February 28, 2019.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



HOMELAND DEFENSE &
GLOBAL SECURITY

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2600 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2600

DEC 19 2018

Mr. Brian Lepore
Director, Defense Capabilities Management
U. S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Lepore:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-19-178, "PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL: Secret Service and DOD Need to Ensure Expenditure Reports Are Prepared and Submitted to Congress" dated October 18, 2018 (GAO Code 101986).

Attached is DoD's response to the subject report. If you have any questions, my point of contact is Ms. Carol Corbin, who can be reached at (571) 256-8319 or via email at carol.a.corbin.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Salesses
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for
Homeland Defense Integration and Defense
Support of Civil Authorities

Enclosure:
As stated

**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED OCTOBER 18, 2018
GAO-19-178 (GAO CODE 101986)**

**“PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL: SECRET SERVICE AND DOD NEED TO ENSURE
EXPENDITURE REPORTS ARE PREPARED AND SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATIONS**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy updates its policy and instruction on providing support to the Secret Service to define the requirements for producing semiannual reports of expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended. This should, at a minimum, include (1) the steps and time frames for completing updates to the policy and instruction, (2) time frames for reporting the expenditures, and (3) an oversight mechanism to ensure the Department of Defense consistently submits these reports to specified congressional committees.

DoD RESPONSE: The Department of Defense concurs with comment and will review and update its policy and instruction as required.

The Department acknowledges its obligation to submit required semiannual reports. It is unclear why this semiannual report has not been submitted to, or inquired about by, Congress for decades. A plausible reason is documented in a 1978 GAO audit in which the GAO recommended that the U.S. Secret Service provide guidance for the reporting of cost expenditures. We were unable to establish if the U.S. Secret Service ever published such guidance.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy defines the steps, including time frames, necessary to achieve near term reporting requirements under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, and submit the reports as required.

DoD RESPONSE: The Department of Defense concurs and, when the Department’s policy and instruction on providing semiannual reports of expenditures required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, as amended, are updated as required, DoD will produce this semiannual report.

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Staff Acknowledgements

In addition to the contact named above, Gina R. Hoffman, Assistant Director; Joseph P. Cruz, Assistant Director; Tracy Barnes, Kerstin Hudon, Jennifer Kamara, Joanne Landesman, Carol Petersen, Michael Silver, Janet Temko-Blinder, and John Wren made key contributions to this report.

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