

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-151](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government owns or leases over 1,700 aircraft to accomplish a wide variety of missions. Federal agencies are generally required to report trips taken by senior federal officials on their aircraft to GSA unless the trips are classified pursuant to executive branch requirements. In February 2013, GAO reported on DOJ senior executives' use of DOJ aviation assets for nonmission purposes for fiscal years 2007 through 2011. GAO identified several issues with respect to the implementation of a provision of GSA regulations that exempts intelligence agencies from reporting information about government aircraft to GSA and that provision's application to unclassified data on senior federal official travel for nonmission purposes.

GAO was asked to review GSA's oversight of executives' use of government aircraft for nonmission purposes. This report addresses the extent to which (1) GSA's reporting exemption for intelligence agencies is consistent with executive branch requirements and (2) GSA ensures the accuracy of its reporting on the use of government aircraft by senior federal officials. GAO reviewed relevant executive branch requirements and GSA regulations, as well as data submitted by DOJ to GSA on trips taken by senior federal officials on DOJ aircraft and interviewed GSA officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that GSA identify the basis of its reporting exemption, and collect additional information when travel is not being reported. GSA concurred and identified actions to address our recommendations.

View [GAO-14-151](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

GSA Should Clarify Its Reporting Exemption and Collect Additional Data on Executives' Use of Aircraft for Nonmission Purposes

What GAO Found

The exemption in General Services Administration (GSA) regulations that allows intelligence agencies not to report unclassified data on senior federal official travel for nonmission purposes is not consistent with executive branch requirements, and GSA has not provided a basis for deviating from these requirements. Specifically, executive branch documents—including Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-126, OMB Bulletin 93-11, and a 1993 presidential memorandum to the heads of all executive departments and agencies—require agencies to report to GSA, and for GSA to collect data, on senior federal official travel on government aircraft for nonmission purposes, except for trips that are classified. As a result, GSA is not collecting all specified unclassified data as directed, and GSA has not provided a basis for deviating from executive branch requirements. Identifying an adequate basis for the intelligence agency reporting exemption or removing the exemption from its regulations if a basis cannot be identified could help GSA ensure its regulations for senior federal official travel comply with executive branch requirements.

GSA aggregates data on senior federal official travel to create publically available Senior Federal Official Travel Reports that, among other things, provide transparency of senior federal officials' use of government aircraft. However, GSA does not determine which agencies' travel is not reported under the exemption for intelligence agencies. For example, in February 2013 GAO found that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—which is a member of the intelligence community—did not report to GSA, based on the intelligence agency exemption, information for 395 unclassified nonmission flights taken by the Attorney General, FBI Director, and other Department of Justice (DOJ) executives from fiscal years 2009 through 2011. However, GSA's Senior Federal Official Travel Reports GAO reviewed for those years provided information on flights for other DOJ components but did not indicate that additional flights may have been omitted on the basis of GSA's exemption for intelligence agencies. GSA senior officials stated that they do not collect this information because they do not distinguish between instances where an agency reports no information because it is invoking the exemption or some other reason, such as that no flights were taken on its aircraft. However, these officials also stated that it could be possible to obtain follow-up information from agencies that did not provide travel data in order to determine why agencies had not reported data. Consistent with *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, if GSA collected additional information from agencies on instances where nonmission travel was not reported because of the exemption for intelligence agencies, as opposed to some other reason, and included such information in its reports, it could help GSA ensure the accuracy of its Senior Federal Official Travel Reports.