Why GAO Did This Study
In 1998, terrorists bombed two U.S. embassies in East Africa, killing over 220 people and injuring more than 4,000 others. In 1999, State launched the CSCP with the primary goal of providing secure, safe, and functional workplaces, and OBO adopted a streamlined, standard design for all new embassies. In 2011, OBO shifted to the Excellence approach for new embassies, where greater use of custom designs is intended to improve embassies' functionality, quality, operating costs, and appearance.

GAO was asked to review the performance of the CSCP. This report examines (1) the pace of the CSCP in constructing new embassies, (2) the cost and schedule performance of OBO’s recent embassy construction projects, and (3) key factors that have affected State’s ability to deliver construction projects efficiently. GAO analyzed information from State planning, funding, and reporting documents and interviewed State and contractor officials. As part of an assessment of nine construction case-study projects, selected for cost or schedule increases, GAO conducted four site visits to embassies under construction.

What GAO Recommends
GAO recommends that State (1) provide information on the estimated effects of inflation on planned projects, (2) provide an analysis of estimated total costs and time frames to complete the CSCP, (3) conduct an OBO-wide workforce analysis, and (4) pilot formal construction partnering. State concurred with our recommendations and also conveyed it is now pursuing other initiatives beyond Excellence.

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