

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.

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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.