



441 G St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

## Accessible Version

April 30, 2020

Congressional Committees

### State and USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018

Senate Report 116-126 accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2020, includes a provision for us to report on the status of all outstanding recommendations made to the U.S. Department of State (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in GAO reports issued during calendar year 2018.<sup>1</sup> This report provides the total number of recommendations we made to State and to USAID in 2018, how many of those recommendations remain open for each agency, and which ones we consider priority recommendations. Priority recommendations are those that we believe warrant priority attention from heads of key departments and agencies.

To address our objective, we used our Business Analytics database to identify all recommendations made to State and USAID in 2018,<sup>2</sup> how many of them we deemed priority recommendations, and the status of the recommendations as of their most recent updates. We compared this list with information provided by State and USAID, and coordinated with these agencies to ensure that we reflected the most recent State and USAID actions in the enclosures detailing the status of the individual recommendations. We will continue to update the status of open recommendations throughout the year on our website <https://www.gao.gov/reports-testimonies/recommendations-database/>.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2020 to April 2020 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.

In summary, as shown in table 1, during calendar year 2018, we made a combined 51 recommendations to State and USAID. Of the 36 recommendations made to State, 11 (31 percent) were still open as of April 2020, two of which are priority recommendations. Of the 15 recommendations made to USAID, two (13 percent) were still open as of April 2020, neither of which is a priority recommendation.

---

<sup>1</sup>S. Rep. No. 116-126, at 19 (2019)

<sup>2</sup>This report provides updates on recommendations made in our publicly available reports from calendar year 2018.

**Table 1: Status of Recommendations Made to the U.S. Department of State (State) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in GAO Products Issued in Calendar Year 2018**

Agency	Number of recommendations total (priority recommendations)	Number of implemented recommendations (priority recommendations)	Number of open recommendations (priority recommendations)
State	36 (3)	25 (1)	11 (2)
USAID	15 (0)	13 (0)	2 (0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>51 (3)</b>	<b>38 (1)</b>	<b>13 (2)</b>

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-20-504R

The enclosures of this report—enclosure I for State and enclosure II for USAID—present information about the recommendations that are still open, including what actions, if any, agencies have taken or planned in response to the recommendations.

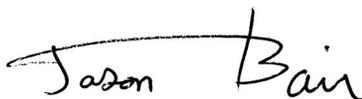
Agency Comments

We provided drafts of this product to State and USAID for comment. State and USAID provided letters, which are attached as enclosures III and IV, respectively. Both letters include additional updates on steps the agencies plan to take to implement the open recommendations identified in this report. In its letter, State said it values our recommendations and will continue to work with us to close them as quickly as possible. In its letter, USAID said that it recognizes the importance of GAO recommendations and will continue to work with us to implement these recommendations.

-----

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of State, the Administrator of USAID, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-6881 or [BairJ@gao.gov](mailto:BairJ@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report were Hynek Kalkus (Assistant Director), Jasmine Senior (Analyst-in-Charge), Ashley Alley, Justin Fisher, Carol Harris, and John Hussey.



Jason Bair  
 Director, International Affairs and Trade

Enclosures – 4

*List of Committees*

The Honorable James E. Risch  
Chairman  
The Honorable Robert Menendez  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Chairman  
The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Eliot L. Engel  
Chairman  
The Honorable Michael T. McCaul  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Chairwoman  
The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

ENCLOSURE I: GAO Recommendations Made to the U.S. Department of State in Calendar Year 2018 That Remained Open as of April 2020

**Table 2: GAO Recommendations Made to the U.S. Department of State (State) in Calendar Year 2018 That Remained Open as of April 2020**

**Priority Recommendations**

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p><a href="#">GAO-18-653</a>  <a href="#">Embassy Construction: Pace Is Slower Than Projected, and State Could Make Program Improvements</a></p>	<p>The Secretary of State should determine the estimated effects of cost inflation on planned Capital Security Construction Program (CSCP) embassy construction capacity and time frames and update this information for stakeholders on a regular basis, such as through the annual budgeting process.</p>	<p>State concurred with this recommendation. As of March 2020, State’s Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) had developed a worldwide construction inflation rate and had integrated this rate into its bureau budget request for fiscal year 2021. According to OBO officials, OBO is working to update its budget guidance to ensure the inflation rate is updated and integrated into future bureau budget requests on a regular basis. To fully implement the recommendation, State needs to provide documentation that this information will be updated and shared with stakeholders such as Congress in the future. We will continue to monitor State’s implementation of this recommendation.</p>
	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of OBO conduct an OBO-wide workforce analysis to assess staffing levels and workload capacity needed to carry out the full range of OBO’s mission goals, to include the CSCP. Such an assessment could provide a basis for broader stakeholder discussion of OBO’s human capital needs and potential prioritization of activities.</p>	<p>State concurred with this recommendation. As of March 2020, OBO was working with the Institute for Defense Analysis to conduct an OBO-wide workforce analysis, with initial findings and recommendations planned for early 2020. We will continue to monitor State’s implementation of this recommendation.</p>

## Other Recommendations

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p><a href="#">GAO-18-42</a></p> <p><a href="#">Information Technology: Agencies Need to Involve Chief Information Officers in Reviewing Billions of Dollars in Acquisitions</a></p>	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure that IT acquisition plans or strategies are reviewed and approved according to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) guidance.</p>	<p>State agreed with our recommendation, and, in a December 2019 update, provided information on the agency's Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC) process and a template for IT acquisition strategies. However, it is not clear whether the Chief Information Officer (CIO) is reviewing and approving IT acquisitions plans through the CPIC process, and the template does not provide a place for CIO review and approval. In addition, we have requested evidence of CIO approval of selected IT acquisitions. We will continue to monitor the implementation of this recommendation.</p>
<p><a href="#">GAO-18-537</a></p> <p><a href="#">Native American Cultural Property: Additional Agency Actions Needed to Assist Tribes with Repatriating Items from Overseas Auctions</a></p>	<p>The Secretary of State should direct State's members of the interagency working group for protection of Native American cultural property to implement selected leading collaboration practices, such as taking steps to agree on outcomes and objectives, clarify roles and responsibilities, and document these decisions.</p>	<p>Since our report was issued in August 2018, the Department of State has shared a statement of its roles and responsibilities with other working group members. However, the statement does not include outcomes and objectives for the group's work. We made the same recommendation to each of the four agencies covered in the review because implementing leading collaboration practices will require the collective participation of group members. We will keep the recommendation open until further collaborative actions are taken.</p>
	<p>The Secretary of State should direct State's members of the interagency working group for protection of Native American cultural property to collaborate with the interagency working group members from other agencies to assess, in consultation with Indian tribes, whether and how amending the U.S. legal framework governing the export, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items would facilitate the repatriation of these items from auctions overseas and report its findings to Congress.</p>	<p>In November 2019, the Department of State, in conjunction with other interagency working group members, circulated a draft legal assessment and draft legislative options. The interagency working group members conducted a listening session with tribal members in November 2019, and conducted a tribal consultation in January 2020. We will continue monitoring State's efforts toward implementing this recommendation.</p>

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p>GAO-18-618</p> <p><a href="#">Central American Police Training: State and USAID Should Ensure Human Rights Content Is Included as Appropriate, and State Should Improve Data</a></p>	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) design internal control mechanisms to ensure human rights content is included in INL-funded police training for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras as appropriate.</p>	<p>State concurred with this recommendation in its official comment letter included as an appendix in GAO-18-618, published in September 2018. State noted that it intends to amend templates for relevant implementing documents to address human rights as appropriate. When we confirm actions taken by State in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information. As of February 2020, State officials indicated that they had expressly included requirements for human rights components in new police training agreements established since we made our recommendation. We continue to work with State to learn about internal control mechanisms they may have established to help ensure they continue to include human rights content in police training as appropriate.</p>
	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure that INL develop and implement a process to collect more reliable data on the number of police trained through INL-funded efforts in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.</p>	<p>State concurred with this recommendation in its official comment letter included as an appendix in GAO-18-618, published in September 2018. State commented that, partly in response to our report, it was developing specific indicators related to INL-funded police training. As of February 2020, State officials indicated that contractors hired to develop measures to track the effect of INL efforts would be developing a database to store results, including the number of police trained. Further, State told us that INL's implementing partner working in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras also keeps a list of individuals who attend training. We continue working with State officials as they make progress developing and implementing their new process to collect and maintain police training data. As we confirm actions taken by State in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.</p>
<p>GAO-18-93</p> <p><a href="#">Federal Chief Information Officers: Critical Actions Needed to Address Shortcomings and Challenges in Implementing Responsibilities</a></p>	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure that the department's IT management policies address the role of the CIO for key responsibilities in the six areas we identified.</p>	<p>The department has begun changing its policies to address this recommendation. When we review those changes, we will provide updated information.</p>

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p>GAO-19-106</p> <p>Colombia: U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance Achieved Some Positive Results, but State Needs to Review the Overall U.S. Approach</p>	<p>The Secretary of State should, in consultation with other U.S. agencies involved in counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, conduct an evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of eradication and interdiction in reducing the cocaine supply.</p>	<p>State generally agreed with our recommendation. As of February 2020, State reported that, working with the Department of Defense (DOD), it had signed a contract with RAND for an evaluation of counternarcotics efforts in Colombia. The evaluation will, among other things, assess the effectiveness of U.S. government-funded counternarcotics assistance programs in Colombia from 2000 through 2018. RAND plans to complete the evaluation within 16 months of the contract's execution. We will continue to monitor progress on the evaluation and State's efforts to implement our recommendation.</p>
	<p>The Secretary of State should, in consultation with other U.S. agencies involved in counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, undertake a comprehensive review of the U.S. counternarcotics approach in Colombia and identify what changes, if any, should be made to the types and combination of U.S. activities, taking into consideration how the relative benefits and limitations between eradication, interdiction, and alternative development may impact the effectiveness of these efforts.</p>	<p>State generally agreed with our recommendation. As of February 2020, State reported that, working with the Department of Defense, it had signed a contract with RAND for an evaluation of counternarcotics efforts in Colombia. The evaluation will include, among other things, a comprehensive review of the U.S. counternarcotics approach in Colombia that considers the relative benefits and limitations between eradication, interdiction, and alternative development efforts. RAND plans to complete the evaluation within 16 months of the contract's execution. We will continue to monitor progress on the evaluation and State's efforts to implement our recommendation.</p>

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p>GAO-19-77</p> <p><a href="#">Human Trafficking: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects</a></p>	<p>The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) establish additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information that the TIP Office uses to monitor counter-trafficking in persons projects.</p>	<p>State concurred with our recommendation and has begun to take corrective action in response. In an April 17, 2019, letter to congressional committees, State noted its commitment to address our recommendation through implementing additional controls for the agency's counter-trafficking in persons projects. Specifically, State reported that its TIP Office is taking steps intended to ensure that new grants management data systems facilitate improved consistency and completeness of performance information, and integrate features related to risk assessment and monitoring. As of January 2020, State officials noted that performance monitoring tools in its new grants management data system were not yet fully deployed. According to State officials, in the interim, TIP Office officials have participated in predeployment testing for this data system and are being trained to use this system, and TIP Office's current grantees now submit quarterly progress reports and copies of their financial reports, and receive feedback on these submissions, through this new system. Once State provides additional information—including information on steps to more fully deploy its new grants management data system—we will determine whether the State TIP Office has established additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information.</p>

Legend: IT = Information Technology; USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-20-504R

**ENCLOSURE II: GAO Recommendations Made to the U.S. Agency for International Development in Calendar Year 2018 That Remained Open as of April 2020**

**Table 3: GAO Recommendations Made to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Calendar Year 2018 That Remained Open as of April 2020**

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p><a href="#">GAO-18-93</a>  <a href="#">Federal Chief Information Officers: Critical Actions Needed to Address Shortcomings and Challenges in Implementing Responsibilities</a></p>	<p>The Administrator of USAID should ensure that the agency's Information Technology management policies address the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) for key responsibilities in the six areas we identified.</p>	<p>The agency did not state whether it agreed or disagreed with the recommendation. However, in May and June 2019, the agency revised its policies to address 21 of the 22 responsibility gaps identified in the report. The remaining responsibility is for the CIO to report directly to the agency head or deputy. While the CIO does report to the agency head (the Administrator), daily oversight is conducted by the Assistant Administrator for Management. We will continue to monitor the steps the agency takes to address this recommendation.</p>
<p><a href="#">GAO-19-77</a>  <a href="#">Human Trafficking: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects</a></p>	<p>The Administrator of USAID should establish additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information that USAID uses to monitor counter-trafficking in persons projects.</p>	<p>USAID concurred with this recommendation and has begun to take corrective action in response. In a March 11, 2019 letter to congressional committees, USAID noted its commitment to address our recommendation through implementing additional controls for the agency's counter-trafficking in persons projects. Specifically, USAID commented that it was implementing data systems and taking additional steps intended to strengthen data management, improve record-keeping, increase data quality, and build capacity of local partners, with a target completion date of April 2020. As of January 2020, USAID officials noted that the agency had piloted its information management system—the Development Information Solution (DIS)—in seven USAID missions and is considering a strategy to deploy DIS agency-wide by the end of 2021. According to USAID officials and documents, work has been completed to build DIS features that will help to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information, such as the ability to create and centrally manage customized indicators within DIS as well as centrally track and manage project activities, targets, and results. USAID has also updated its performance monitoring policy to require the completion of Performance Management Plans within 3 months of completion of the mission's Country Development Cooperation Strategy, instead of the previously required 6 months. In addition, according to USAID officials and documents we reviewed, USAID and the Department of State's (State) Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources have developed additional administrative reports and processes that encourage increased ownership and review of data in the FACTSinfo NextGen system, the system of record for performance information related to the expenditure of foreign assistance funds. According to USAID officials and documents we reviewed, in order to improve quality control for this data, USAID and State will conduct a high-level administrative review of the performance reporting process, including of the participation of key stakeholders in this process, beginning in March 2020. Once USAID provides additional information, including information on steps to more fully deploy DIS and implement changes resulting from its review of the performance plan report process under its new grants management data system, we will determine whether USAID has established additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information.</p>

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-20-504R

ENCLOSURE III: Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

Thomas Melito  
Managing Director  
International Affairs and Trade  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

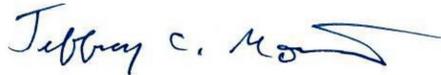
**APR 21 2020**

Dear Mr. Melito:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft correspondence, "STATE AND USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018." GAO Jobe Code 104072.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey C. Mounts (Acting)

Enclosure:  
As stated

cc: GAO – Jason Bair (Acting)  
OIG – Norman Brown

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report**

STATE AND USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations

Made in 2018

(GAO-20-504R, GAO Job Code 104072)

Thank you for providing the Department with the opportunity to respond to this GAO draft correspondence. In response to the congressional mandate, the Department is attaching an update on the actions taken, or to be taken, on these GAO recommendations. The Department recently provided this information as an appendix to the FY 2021 Congressional Budget Justification, pursuant to Public Law 115-414, *Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act*.

As you know, we value GAO recommendations to improve our programs and operations. The Department has been providing timely updates to GAO throughout the year and GAO has been posting these updates on its website, <https://www.gao.gov/reports-testimonies/recommendations-database/>. The Department will continue to work with GAO to assure that recommendations are closed as quickly as possible.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Colombia: U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance Achieved Some Positive Results but State Needs to Review the Overall U.S. Approach	GAO-19-106	Dec 12, 2018	The Secretary of State should, in consultation with other U.S. agencies involved in counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, conduct an evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of eradication and interdiction in reducing the cocaine supply.	INL	A copy of the signed IAA was provided to GAO, and the recommendation will remain open until the evaluation is completed, in approximately 15 months.
Colombia: U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance Achieved Some Positive Results but State Needs to Review the Overall U.S. Approach	GAO-19-106	Dec 12, 2018	The Secretary of State should, in consultation with other U.S. agencies involved in counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, undertake a comprehensive review of the U.S. counternarcotics approach in Colombia and identify what changes, if any, should be made to the types and combination of U.S. activities, taking into consideration how the relative benefits and limitations between eradication, interdiction, and alternative development may impact the effectiveness of these efforts.	INL	A copy of the signed IAA was provided to GAO, and the recommendation will remain open until the evaluation is completed, in approximately 15 months.
Human Trafficking: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects	GAO-19-77	Dec 4, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office establishes additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information that the TIP Office uses to monitor counter-trafficking in persons projects.	J/TIP	<b>Implemented and under GAO review for closure</b>
Embassy Construction: Pace Is Slower Than Projected, and State Could Make Program Improvements	GAO-18-653	Sep 25, 2018	<b>(Priority)</b> The Secretary of State should determine the estimated effects of cost inflation on planned CSCP embassy construction capacity and time frames and	OBO	OBO integrated the inflation analysis into its guidance for writing bureau budget requests, which was provided to GAO on March 31, 2020. GAO indicated it would need to see in State's FY22 CBJ a mention of inflation, regardless of the requested budget amount. State could flat line, or even request less than

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
			update this information for stakeholders on a regular basis, such as through the annual budgeting process.		\$2.2 billion, but would still provide Congress with information on the impact of inflation on their program—e.g. “we note that this does not take into account construction inflation, which is a long term challenge to our program.” Alternatively, if State were to more generally communicate the inflation rate and its potential long terms effects in a CSCP status report or other communication to the appropriate committees separate from the budget process that would close the recommendation as well.
Embassy Construction: Pace Is Slower Than Projected, and State Could Make Program Improvements	GAO-18-653	Sep 25, 2018	<b>(Priority)</b> The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of OBO conducts an OBO-wide workforce analysis to assess staffing levels and workload capacity needed to carry out the full range of OBO’s mission goals, to include the CSCP. Such an assessment could provide a basis for broader stakeholder discussion of OBO’s human capital needs and potential prioritization of activities.	OBO	GAO will close this recommendation once OBO’s contractor (IDA) completes the bureau-wide workforce analysis. The final assessment, which was expected at the end of March, has been delayed due to the COVID-19 emergency.
Central American Police Training: State and USAID Should Ensure Human Rights Content Is Included as Appropriate, and State Should Improve Data	GAO-18-618	Sep 5, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) designs internal control mechanisms to ensure human rights content is included in INL-funded police training for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras as appropriate.	INL	In new agreements established either by INL or with interagency partners using INL funds since the recommendations were received, requirements for human rights components have been expressly included. Resources permitting, INL anticipates signing at least two regional Inter-Agency Agreements (IAA) in CY 2020 and has clearly defined this requirement with those respective agencies in drafts that are now circulating. With the stoppage to Northern Triangle foreign assistance during much of CY 2019, much of INL’s training for police slowed to accommodate shifting guidance and realigning of plans for the region. Given the current COVID-19 crisis, all trainings, unless virtual, have stopped or slowed with law enforcement partners as they focus on health and safety support. In the only IAA signed in CY 2019, multiple references to human rights training requirements were included.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
					<p>Samples have been provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “DHS will ensure training is consistent with and directly addresses Guatemalan immigration law, international human rights standards for law enforcement, and any international commitments.”</li> <li>• “Activities will include: Support the development of standard operating procedures for the MTIU, including appropriate use of equipment, delegation of authority, human rights; Standard operating procedures for humane treatment of migrants”</li> <li>• “Performance measure 1.4: Number of Guatemalan officials trained in U.S. recommended SOPs for border best practices, inclusive of human rights training.”</li> <li>• “In accordance with Section 620J of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and Embassy Guatemala’s Leahy policy, Guatemalan law enforcement trained and advised under this agreement must positively complete Leahy Vetting prior to receiving any U.S. training under this agreement. All Guatemalan law enforcement and immigration personnel will also receive a session on human rights as part of the U.S. training.”</li> </ul>
Central American Police Training: State and USAID Should Ensure Human Rights Content Is Included as Appropriate, and State Should Improve Data	GAO-18-618	Sep 5, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) develops and implements a process to collect more reliable data on the number of police trained through INL-funded efforts in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.	INL	In the case of the IAA with DOJ OPDAT in Honduras, there is no element of training for police in the agreement, as the training is targeted towards tax prosecutors. Better tracking of data for police training is, however, on course for Honduras through the deployment of the Global Training and Tracking System (GTTS). INL Honduras is piloting the system and has started to implement it for both police and civilian trainings conducted by INL, funded by INL, or with a component of Leahy or civilian vetting. Through our Monitoring and Evaluation contract with Dexis, INL is currently developing measures across programs in the Western Hemisphere to track the impact of our work. Phase II of the contract recently began in FY 2020 and includes the development of a database for accurate storage of all measures, including numbers of police trained. In Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, our logistics

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
					grantee keeps lists of individuals that attend training with their support. Between these sources, and possibly GTTS in the future, INL will have a more accurate representation of the totality of our police training programs.
Native American Cultural Property: Additional Agency Actions Needed to Assist Tribes with Repatriating Items from Overseas Auctions	GAO-18-537	Aug 6, 2018	The Secretary of State should direct State's members of the interagency working group for protection of Native American cultural property to implement selected leading collaboration practices, such as taking steps to agree on outcomes and objectives, clarify roles and responsibilities, and document these decisions.	ECA	The Department provided a statement of its roles and responsibilities with other working group members. GAO is seeking additional documentation on outcomes and objectives for the group's work. This is expected to be completed in 2020.
Native American Cultural Property: Additional Agency Actions Needed to Assist Tribes with Repatriating Items from Overseas Auctions	GAO-18-537	Aug 6, 2018	The Secretary of State should direct State's members of the interagency working group for protection of Native American cultural property to collaborate with the interagency working group members from other agencies to assess, in consultation with Indian tribes, whether and how amending the U.S. legal framework governing the export, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items would facilitate the repatriation of these items from auctions overseas and report its findings to Congress.	ECA	The interagency working group developed a draft legal assessment and draft legislative options. The interagency working group also conducted a listening session with tribal members in November 2019 and a tribal consultation in January 2020.
Federal Chief Information Officers: Critical Actions Needed to Address Shortcomings and Challenges in Implementing	GAO-18-93	Aug 2, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the department's IT management policies address the role of the CIO for key responsibilities in the six areas we identified.	IRM	The Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) has drafted a Plan of Action to include timeline and milestones to identify and update all policies impacted by this recommendation.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Responsibilities					
Freedom of Information Act: Agencies Are Implementing Requirements but Additional Actions Are Needed	GAO-18-365	Jun 25, 2018	The Secretary of State should take steps to develop and document a plan that fully addresses best practices with regards to reduction of backlogged FOIA requests.	A	Implemented and under GAO review for closure
Information Technology: Agencies Need to Involve Chief Information Officers in Reviewing Billions of Dollars in Acquisitions	GAO-18-42	Jan 10, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that IT acquisition plans or strategies are reviewed and approved according to OMB's guidance.	IRM	GAO has requested additional evidence that demonstrates the Chief Information Officer (or designee) is reviewing and approving IT acquisition plans or strategies, to close this recommendation.

**Text of ENCLOSURE III: Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report**

Page 1

APR 21 2020

Thomas Melito

Managing Director

International Affairs and Trade Government Accountability Office 441 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Melito:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft correspondence, "STATE AND USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018." GAO Jobe Code 104072.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Mounts (Acting)

Enclosure:

As stated

cc: GAO – Jason Bair (Acting) OIG – Norman Brown

**Page 2**

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

STATE AND USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018

(GAO-20-504R, GAO Job Code 104072)

Thank you for providing the Department with the opportunity to respond to this GAO draft correspondence. In response to the congressional mandate, the Department is attaching an update on the actions taken, or to be taken, on these GAO recommendations. The Department recently provided this information as an appendix to the FY 2021 Congressional Budget Justification, pursuant to Public Law 115-414, Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act.

As you know, we value GAO recommendations to improve our programs and operations. The Department has been providing timely updates to GAO throughout the year and GAO has been posting these updates on its website, <https://www.gao.gov/reports-testimonies/recommendations-database/>. The Department will continue to work with GAO to assure that recommendations are closed as quickly as possible.

**Page 3**

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Colombia: U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance Achieved Some Positive Results but State Needs to Review the Overall U.S. Approach	GAO-19-106	Dec 12, 2018	The Secretary of State should, in consultation with other U.S. agencies involved in counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, conduct an evaluation of the long-term effectiveness of eradication and interdiction in reducing the cocaine supply.	INL	A copy of the signed IAA was provided to GAO, and the recommendation will remain open until the evaluation is completed, in approximately 15 months.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Colombia: U.S. Counternarcotics Assistance Achieved Some Positive Results but State Needs to Review the Overall U.S. Approach	GAO-19-106	Dec 12, 2018	The Secretary of State should, in consultation with other U.S. agencies involved in counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, undertake a comprehensive review of the U.S. counternarcotics approach in Colombia and identify what changes, if any, should be made to the types and combination of U.S. activities, taking into consideration how the relative benefits and limitations between eradication, interdiction, and alternative development may impact the effectiveness of these efforts.	INL	A copy of the signed IAA was provided to GAO, and the recommendation will remain open until the evaluation is completed, in approximately 15 months.
Human Trafficking: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Counter-trafficking Projects	GAO-19-77	Dec 4, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the TIP Office establishes additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information that the TIP Office uses to monitor counter-trafficking in persons projects.	J/TIP	Implemented and under GAO review for closure
Embassy Construction: Pace Is Slower Than Projected, and State Could Make Program Improvements	GAO-18-653	Sep 25, 2018	<b>(Priority)</b> The Secretary of State should determine the estimated effects of cost inflation on planned CSCP embassy construction capacity and time frames and update this information for stakeholders on a regular basis, such as through the annual budgeting process.	OBO	OBO integrated the inflation analysis into its guidance for writing bureau budget requests, which was provided to GAO on March 31, 2020. GAO indicated it would need to see in State’s FY22 CBJ a mention of inflation, regardless of the requested budget amount. State could flat line, or even request less than \$2.2 billion, but would still provide Congress with information on the impact of inflation on their program—e.g. “we note that this does not take into account construction inflation, which is a long term challenge to our program.” Alternatively, if State were to more generally communicate the inflation rate and its potential long terms effects in a CSCP status report or other communication to the appropriate committees separate from the budget process that would close the recommendation as well.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Embassy Construction: Pace Is Slower Than Projected, and State Could Make Program Improvements	GAO-18-653	Sep 25, 2018	(Priority) The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of OBO conducts an OBO-wide workforce analysis to assess staffing levels and workload capacity needed to carry out the full range of OBO's mission goals, to include the CSCP. Such an assessment could provide a basis for broader stakeholder discussion of OBO's human capital needs and potential prioritization of activities.	OBO	GAO will close this recommendation once OBO's contractor (IDA) completes the bureau-wide workforce analysis. The final assessment, which was expected at the end of March, has been delayed due to the COVID-19 emergency.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Central American Police Training: State and USAID Should Ensure Human Rights Content Is Included as Appropriate, and State Should Improve Data	GAO-18-618	Sep 5, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) designs internal control mechanisms to ensure human rights content is included in INL-funded police training for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras as appropriate.	INL	<p>In new agreements established either by INL or with interagency partners using INL funds since the recommendations were received, requirements for human rights components have been expressly included. Resources permitting, INL anticipates signing at least two regional Inter-Agency Agreements (IAA) in CY 2020 and has clearly defined this requirement with those respective agencies in drafts that are now circulating. With the stoppage to Northern Triangle foreign assistance during much of CY 2019, much of INL’s training for police slowed to accommodate shifting guidance and realigning of plans for the region. Given the current COVID-19 crisis, all trainings, unless virtual, have stopped or slowed with law enforcement partners as they focus on health and safety support. In the only IAA signed in CY 2019, multiple references to human rights training requirements were included. Samples have been provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “DHS will ensure training is consistent with and directly addresses Guatemalan immigration law, international human rights standards for law enforcement, and any international commitments.”</li> <li>• “Activities will include: Support the development of standard operating procedures for the MTIU, including appropriate use of equipment, delegation of authority, human rights; Standard operating procedures for humane treatment of migrants”</li> <li>• “Performance measure 1.4: Number of Guatemalan officials trained in U.S. recommended SOPs for border best practices, inclusive of human rights training.”</li> <li>• “In accordance with Section 620J of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and Embassy Guatemala’s Leahy policy, Guatemalan law enforcement trained and advised under this agreement must positively complete Leahy Vetting prior to receiving any U.S. training under this agreement. All Guatemalan law enforcement and immigration personnel will also receive a session on human rights as part of the U.S.training.”</li> </ul>

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Central American Police Training: State and USAID Should Ensure Human Rights Content Is Included as Appropriate, and State Should Improve Data	GAO-18-618	Sep 5, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) develops and implements a process to collect more reliable data on the number of police trained through INL-funded efforts in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.	INL	In the case of the IAA with DOJ OPDAT in Honduras, there is no element of training for police in the agreement, as the training is targeted towards tax prosecutors. Better tracking of data for police training is, however, on course for Honduras through the deployment of the Global Training and Tracking System (GTTS). INL Honduras is piloting the system and has started to implement it for both police and civilian trainings conducted by INL, funded by INL, or with a component of Leahy or civilian vetting. Through our Monitoring and Evaluation contract with Dexis, INL is currently developing measures across programs in the Western Hemisphere to track the impact of our work. Phase II of the contract recently began in FY 2020 and includes the development of a database for accurate storage of all measures, including numbers of police trained. In Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, our logistics grantee keeps lists of individuals that attend training with their support. Between these sources, and possibly GTTS in the future, INL will have a more accurate representation of the totality of our police training programs.
Native American Cultural Property: Additional Agency Actions Needed to Assist Tribes with Repatriating Items from Overseas Auctions	GAO-18-537	Aug 6, 2018	The Secretary of State should direct State's members of the interagency working group for protection of Native American cultural property to implement selected leading collaboration practices, such as taking steps to agree on outcomes and objectives, clarify roles and responsibilities, and document these decisions.	ECA	The Department provided a statement of its roles and responsibilities with other working group members. GAO is seeking additional documentation on outcomes and objectives for the group's work. This is expected to be completed in 2020.

GAO Report Title	GAO Report Number	Publicly Released	Recommendation	Bureau	Status and Timeline
Native American Cultural Property: Additional Agency Actions Needed to Assist Tribes with Repatriating Items from Overseas Auctions	GAO-18-537	Aug 6, 2018	The Secretary of State should direct State's members of the interagency working group for protection of Native American cultural property to collaborate with the interagency working group members from other agencies to assess, in consultation with Indian tribes, whether and how amending the U.S. legal framework governing the export, theft, and trafficking of Native American cultural items would facilitate the repatriation of these items from auctions overseas and report its findings to Congress.	ECA	The interagency working group developed a draft legal assessment and draft legislative options. The interagency working group also conducted a listening session with tribal members in November 2019 and a tribal consultation in January 2020.
Federal Chief Information Officers: Critical Actions Needed to Address Shortcomings and Challenges in Implementing Responsibilities	GAO-18-93	Aug 2, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that the department's IT management policies address the role of the CIO for key responsibilities in the six areas we identified.	IRM	The Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) has drafted a Plan of Action to include timeline and milestones to identify and update all policies impacted by this recommendation.
Freedom of Information Act: Agencies Are Implementing Requirements but Additional Actions Are Needed	GAO-18-365	Jun 25, 2018	The Secretary of State should take steps to develop and document a plan that fully addresses best practices with regards to reduction of backlogged FOIA requests.	A	Implemented and under GAO review for closure
Information Technology: Agencies Need to Involve Chief Information Officers in Reviewing Billions of Dollars in Acquisitions	GAO-18-42	Jan 10, 2018	The Secretary of State should ensure that IT acquisition plans or strategies are reviewed and approved according to OMB's guidance.	IRM	GAO has requested additional evidence that demonstrates the Chief Information Officer (or designee) is reviewing and approving IT acquisition plans or strategies, to close this recommendation.

ENCLOSURE IV: United States Agency for International Development Comments on GAO Draft Report



Thomas Melito  
Managing Director  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018 to Cognizant Departments and Agencies, (GAO-20-504R)

Dear Mr. Melito:

I am pleased to provide the formal response of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to the draft report produced by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018 to Cognizant Departments and Agencies on March 20, 2020, (GAO-20-504R)*.

USAID takes all of GAO's recommendations seriously. We recognize the importance of respecting taxpayer investments in development by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of USAID's programming and operations. USAID has engaged extensively with the GAO to work toward the implementation of all outstanding recommendations from 2018, including by inviting GAO staff to view updated systems developed in response to audits of our food-assistance programs. USAID continues to work with the GAO to provide additional evidence of our implementation of these recommendations.

During Calendar Year 2018, GAO made 15 recommendations to USAID, of which only two remain open. GAO does not consider either of these to be priority recommendations.

I am transmitting this letter and the enclosed comments from USAID for inclusion in the GAO's final report. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while conducting this engagement. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the complete and thorough evaluation of our 2018 open recommendations.

Sincerely,

*Frederick M. Nutt*

Frederick M. Nutt,  
Assistant to the Administrator  
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

**COMMENTS BY THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON  
THE DRAFT REPORT PRODUCED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT  
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO) TITLED, *STATUS OF GAO  
RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN 2018 TO COGNIZANT DEPARTMENTS AND  
AGENCIES, (GAO-20-504R)***

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) would like to thank the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) for the opportunity to respond to this draft report. We appreciate the extensive work of the GAO engagement team. We have closely reviewed the specific findings that will help USAID achieve greater effectiveness in addressing shortcomings and challenges in implementing the Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO) responsibilities and improving the monitoring of international counter-trafficking projects.

In response to each of the outstanding recommendations made in 2018, we are providing the following updates:

**GAO 18-93: *FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS: Critical Actions Needed to Address Shortcomings and Challenges in Implementing Responsibilities:***

**Recommendation:** The Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development should ensure that the agency's Information Technology (IT) management policies address the role of the CIO for key responsibilities in the six areas we identified.

**Status Update:** In compliance with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), USAID is in the process of updating its policy to reflect the organizational relationship published on our public website (<https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization>), that the Chief Information Officer (CIO) reports directly to the Administrator. As of March 26, 2020, this policy is pending clearance by appropriate stakeholders and will be posted in the Agency's Automated Directives System (ADS), specifically ADS 101 Agency Programs and Functions.

**Target Completion Date: April 17, 2020.**

**GAO 19-77: *HUMAN TRAFFICKING: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Countertrafficking Projects:***

**Recommendation:** The Administrator of USAID should establish additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information the USAID uses to monitor counter-trafficking in persons projects.

**Status Update:**

The USAID and the Department of State ("DOS") Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources ("F") manage the FACTSInfo NextGen system, which is the system of record for all

Performance Plan Reports (PPR). The PPR is the annual data call whereby USAID and the Department of State operating units that expend foreign-assistance funds must report on all standard foreign-assistance indicators and key issue questions that are applicable to their programming. While this is not new, USAID and F have developed additional administrative reports and processes that encourage increased ownership and review of data. USAID and F require indicator and key issue owner participation in the review and feedback phase of PPR development, which is a month long process where USAID/Washington and Department of State based owners and data users are required to review relevant submitted draft PPRs and provide feedback, with the goal of improving data quality and providing an additional layer of review and oversight before the PPR is finalized. Additionally, for the FY19 PPR, F and USAID implemented FACTSInfo NextGen system upgrades that allow system OUs and indicator and key issue owners dialogue, whereas previous iterations of the system would only allow submission of one comment and response. The improved dialogue function improves the ability of indicator and key issue owners to work jointly towards a more accurate and complete PPR and improve OU accountability for their submissions. In FY19, USAID and F also provided an additional administrative report that allows indicator and key issue owners to extract all submitted comments, which improved the ability of owners to collaborate within their own working group, office, or bureau.

USAID and F are currently conducting a high-level administrative review of the PPR process, that began in March 2020, to ensure that standard indicator owners and key issue owners are participating in the PPR process and reviewing the data that they requested from the field. Included in this review, USAID is gathering feedback from Missions and implementing partners on new Counter-Trafficking in Persons (C-TIP) indicators. USAID is also requesting that missions integrate the indicators into new and future awards and begin collecting data on them now for the FY20 PPR. This work is also complementary to the Development Information Solution (DIS) but is continuing independently from the Agency's roll out of DIS. DIS allows Missions to manage indicator data at a discrete level - activity level for now and sub-activity level in the future. By holding indicator owners and key issue owners accountable and requiring that they participate in the PPR process, USAID and F seek to improve data quality control and practice continuous quality improvement.

**Target Completion Date: Communication and Roll out of indicators: June 2020 and PPR Results: November 2020.**

**Text of ENCLOSURE IV: United States Agency for International Development  
Comments on GAO Draft Report**

Page 1

Thomas Melito Managing Director

U.S. Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018 to Cognizant Departments and Agencies,  
(GAO-20-504R)

Dear Mr. Melito:

I am pleased to provide the formal response of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to the draft report produced by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2018 to cognizant Departments and Agencies on March 20, 2020, (GAO-20-504R).

USAID takes all of GAO's recommendations seriously. We recognize the importance of respecting taxpayer investments in development by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of USAID's programming and operations. USAID has engaged extensively with the GAO to work toward the implementation of all outstanding recommendations from 2018, including by inviting GAO staff to view updated systems developed in response to audits of our food-assistance programs. USAID continues to work with the GAO to provide additional evidence of our implementation of these recommendations.

During Calendar Year 2018, GAO made 15 recommendations to USAID, of which only two remain open. GAO does not consider either of these to be priority recommendations.

I am transmitting this letter and the enclosed comments from USAID for inclusion in the GAO's final report. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while conducting this engagement. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the complete and thorough evaluation of our 2018 open recommendations.

Frederick M. Nutt,

Assistant to the Administrator Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

Page 2

**COMMENTS BY THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE  
DRAFT REPORT PRODUCED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE  
(GAO) TITLED, STATUS OF GAO RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN 2018 TO COGNIZANT  
DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, (GAO-20-504R)**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) would like to thank the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) for the opportunity to respond to this draft report. We appreciate the extensive work of the GAO engagement team. We have closely reviewed the specific findings that will help USAID achieve greater effectiveness in addressing shortcomings

and challenges in implementing the Office of the Chief Information Officer (M/CIO) responsibilities and improving the monitoring of international counter-trafficking projects.

In response to each of the outstanding recommendations made in 2018, we are providing the following updates:

**GAO 18-93: FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS: Critical Actions Needed to Address Shortcomings and Challenges in Implementing Responsibilities:**

Recommendation: The Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development should ensure that the agency's Information Technology (IT) management policies address the role of the CIO for key responsibilities in the six areas we identified.

Status Update: In compliance with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA), USAID is in the process of updating its policy to reflect the organizational relationship published on our public website (<https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization>), that the Chief Information Officer (CIO) reports directly to the Administrator. As of March 26, 2020, this policy is pending clearance by appropriate stakeholders and will be posted in the Agency's Automated Directives System (ADS), specifically ADS 101 Agency Programs and Functions.

Target Completion Date: April 17, 2020.

**GAO 19-77: HUMAN TRAFFICKING: State and USAID Should Improve Their Monitoring of International Countertrafficking Projects:**

Recommendation: The Administrator of USAID should establish additional controls to improve the consistency and completeness of performance information the USAID uses to monitor counter-trafficking in persons projects.

Status Update:

The USAID and the Department of State ("DOS") Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources ("F") manage the FACTSInfo NextGen system, which is the system of record for all

Page 3

Performance Plan Reports (PPR). The PPR is the annual data call whereby USAID and the Department of State operating units that expend foreign-assistance funds must report on all standard foreign-assistance indicators and key issue questions that are applicable to their programming. While this is not new, USAID and F have developed additional administrative reports and processes that encourage increased ownership and review of data. USAID and F require indicator and key issue owner participation in the review and feedback phase of PPR development, which is a month long process where USAID/Washington and Department of State based owners and data users are required to review relevant submitted draft PPRs and provide feedback, with the goal of improving data quality and providing an additional layer of review and oversight before the PPR is finalized. Additionally, for the FY19 PPR, F and USAID implemented FACTSInfo NextGen system upgrades that allow system OUs and indicator and key issue owners dialogue, whereas previous iterations of the system would only allow submission of one comment and response. The improved dialogue function improves the ability of indicator and key issue owners to work jointly towards a more accurate and complete PPR and improve OU accountability for their submissions. In FY19, USAID and F also provided an additional administrative report that allows indicator and key issue owners to extract all submitted comments, which improved the ability of owners to collaborate within their own working group, office, or bureau.

USAID and F are currently conducting a high-level administrative review of the PPR process, that began in March 2020, to ensure that standard indicator owners and key issue owners are participating in the PPR process and reviewing the data that they requested from the field.

Included in this review, USAID is gathering feedback from Missions and implementing partners on new Counter-Trafficking in Persons (C-TIP) indicators. USAID is also requesting that missions integrate the indicators into new and future awards and begin collecting data on them now for the FY20 PPR. This work is also complementary to the Development Information Solution (DIS) but is continuing independently from the Agency's roll out of DIS. DIS allows Missions to manage indicator data at a discrete level - activity level for now and sub-activity level in the future. By holding indicator owners and key issue owners accountable and requiring that they participate in the PPR process, USAID and F seek to improve data quality control and practice continuous quality improvement.

Target Completion Date: Communication and Roll out of indicators: June 2020 and PPR Results: November 2020.

(Job Code 104072)