

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-288](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Commonly known for protecting the President, the Secret Service also plays a role in investigating and preventing a variety of financial and electronic crimes (e.g., counterfeiting). To execute its dual investigative and protective missions, the Secret Service operates a domestic field office structure of 115 offices in 42 districts.

GAO was asked to review the Secret Service's domestic field office structure. This report evaluates (1) the costs of the Secret Service's domestic field office structure and to what extent the data are reliable, (2) how domestic offices enable the Secret Service to accomplish its missions, and (3) the extent to which the Secret Service uses available data to ensure that its domestic field office structure meets its mission needs and what data reliability challenges, if any, exist.

GAO analyzed the Secret Service's cost, performance, and travel data for fiscal years 2009 through 2014, including a regression analysis of cost to performance. GAO also interviewed Secret Service headquarters officials; officials from 12 domestic offices selected based on size, performance and mission focus; and 15 of the agency's law enforcement partners.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that the Secret Service implement a review process to ensure it accurately records cost data, and conduct an analysis of its domestic field office structure using cost and performance data. The Department of Homeland Security concurred.

View [GAO-16-288](#). For more information, contact Diana C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

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U.S. SECRET SERVICE

Data Analysis Could Better Inform the Domestic Field Office Structure

What GAO Found

From fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the annual cost of the U.S. Secret Service's domestic field office structure—including 115 field offices, resident offices, and resident agencies—ranged from \$500 million to \$549 million, but the Secret Service did not accurately record cost data for some offices. GAO determined that although the Secret Service's cost data were reasonably reliable in the aggregate, salary and benefit costs may not have been accurately recorded in the agency's time and attendance system for 21 of 73 of the agency's smaller offices. Specifically,

- thirteen resident offices and resident agencies likely had their salaries and benefits costs attributed to the field offices in their districts, and
- eight had higher than expected salaries and benefits costs that may include the salaries and benefits of personnel in field offices.

By implementing a review process to ensure time and attendance charge codes for cost data are correctly established, the Secret Service could reliably determine the cost of each of its domestic offices.

The Secret Service's domestic offices predominately carry out the agency's investigative mission of various financial and electronic crimes and play an integral role in providing protection. GAO's analysis of Secret Service data from fiscal years 2009 through 2014 found that domestic offices removed at least \$18 million in counterfeit funds from circulation annually, and coordinated with state and local partners to support between 5,597 and 6,386 protective visits each year. The Secret Service has developed a performance system, which aligns with its missions, to assess domestic office contributions to the agency's missions, which vary by office.

GAO also found that the Secret Service uses data to adjust staffing for the domestic offices, but the agency does not fully use all available data to analyze its domestic field office structure. For example, the Secret Service has not compared domestic field office districts' costs relative to performance or used personnel travel data to analyze whether the domestic offices are optimally located and sized to best meet the agency's mission needs. GAO's analyses of cost, performance, and travel data indicated that some field office districts were more efficient than others and personnel from four domestic offices frequently traveled to non-Secret Service office locations for investigations, potentially indicating the need for a Secret Service presence in these locations. This type of analysis could help the Secret Service determine if its field office structure is responsive to changing conditions and if an adjustment to the structure is warranted. By conducting an analysis of its domestic offices using cost and performance data, among other data as appropriate, the Secret Service could be better positioned to ensure that its domestic field office structure is meeting its mission needs.

This is a public version of a sensitive report that GAO issued in November 2015. Information that the Secret Service deemed sensitive has been removed.