



June 15, 2018

Congressional Committees

State and USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2015 and 2016

Senate Report 115-152 accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2018, includes a provision for us to report on the status of all 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 years 2015 and 2016.¹ This report provides the total number of recommendations we made to State and to USAID in those 2 years, how many of those recommendations remain open for each agency, and which ones we consider priority recommendations. Priority recommendations are those that GAO believes warrant priority attention from heads of key departments and agencies.

To address our objective, we used GAO’s Business Analytics database to identify all recommendations made to State and USAID in 2015 and 2016, how many GAO deemed priority recommendations, and the status of the recommendations as of their most recent updates. We shared this information with State and USAID to ascertain that the most recent State and USAID actions were reflected in the enclosures detailing the status of the individual recommendations.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2018 to June 2018 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, during calendar years 2015 and 2016, GAO made a combined total of 132 recommendations to State and USAID. Of the 82 recommendations made to State, 37 (about 45 percent) were still open as of June 7, 2018, and 10 of those were priority recommendations (see table 1).

Table 1: Status of Recommendations Made to the U.S. Department of State in GAO Products Issued in Calendar Years 2015 and 2016

	No. of recommendations (Priority recommendations)		
	2015	2016	Total
Recommendations made	43 (6)	39 (15)	82 (21)
Recommendations implemented	26 (3)	19 (8)	45 (11)
Recommendations open	17 (3)	20 (7)	37 (10)

Source: GAO. | GAO-18-532R

Note: Status of recommendations, whether implemented or open, is as of June 7, 2018.

¹S. Rep. No. 115-152, at 12 (2017) (accompanying S.1780, 115th Cong. (2017)), which is related to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, Pub. L. No. 115-141 (Mar. 23, 2018).

Of the 50 recommendations made to USAID, 2 (4 percent) were still open as of June 7, 2018, and none were priority recommendations (see table 2).

Table 2: Status of Recommendations Made to the U.S. Agency for International Development in GAO Products Issued in Calendar Years 2015 and 2016

	No. of recommendations (Priority recommendations)		
	2015	2016	Total
Total recommendations	36 (9)	14 (4)	50 (13)
Recommendations implemented	34 (9)	14 (4)	48 (13)
Recommendations open	2 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)

Source: GAO. | GAO-18-532R

Note: Status of recommendations, whether implemented or open, is as of June 7, 2018.

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. One of the open recommendations to State included in the numerical count has been deemed by State to be sensitive but unclassified; thus, it is not included in enclosure I.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this product to State and USAID for comment. In its comments (see enclosure III), State said it would continue to provide us with quarterly updates and to work with us to assure that its recommendations are closed as quickly as possible. In its comments (see enclosure IV), USAID stated that it has made it a corporate priority to carry out GAO recommendations. Since USAID transmitted its comments, we have closed two of the four recommendations that, in the draft report, we had identified as being open.

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) 512-9601 or MelitoT@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), Mattias Fenton (Analyst-in-Charge), and David Dayton.



Thomas Melito
 Managing Director, International Affairs and Trade

Enclosures - 4

List of Committees

The Honorable Bob Corker
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 Ed Royce
Chairman
The Honorable Eliot L. Engel
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
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 Years 2015 and 2016 That Remained Open as of June 7, 2018

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
Priority Recommendations		
<p>GAO-15-700 Diplomatic Security: State Department Should Better Manage Risks to Residences and Other Soft Targets Overseas</p>	<p>1. To enhance State's efforts to manage risks to residences, schools, and other soft targets overseas, the Secretary of State should direct the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) to institute procedures to improve posts' compliance with requirements for conducting residential security surveys.</p>	<p>To improve posts' compliance with residential survey requirements, State is developing a global standardized residential survey program that, according to DS, will give DS officials at State headquarters and security officers at posts the ability to access and audit security surveys for all residential holdings. DS estimated a 12-month development cycle for this program beginning in February 2017. As of January 2018, State had not completed the described actions. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.</p>
	<p>2. To enhance State's efforts to manage risks to residences, schools, and other soft targets overseas, the Secretary of State should direct DS to take steps to clarify existing standards and security-related guidance for residences. For example, DS could conduct a comprehensive review of its various standards and security-related guidance for residences and take steps to identify and eliminate gaps and inconsistencies.</p>	<p>State conducted a review of existing standards and identified numerous gaps, inconsistencies, and standards receiving exceptions more than being followed. As of January 2018, State was in the process of updating these standards. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.</p>
	<p>3. To enhance State's efforts to manage risks to residences, schools, and other soft targets overseas, the Secretary of State should direct DS to develop procedures for ensuring that all residences at posts overseas either meet applicable standards or have required exceptions on file.</p>	<p>To ensure residences meet applicable standards, State is developing a global standardized residential survey program that, according to DS, will give DS officials at State headquarters and security officers at posts the ability to access and audit security surveys for all residential holdings. DS has estimated a 12-month development cycle for this program beginning in February 2017. As of October 2017, DS had also launched a system to track exception requests and approvals. State had not completed the described actions as of January 2018. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.</p>
<p>GAO-16-435 Security Assistance: U.S. Government Should Strengthen End-Use Monitoring and Human Rights Vetting for Egypt</p>	<p>4. To strengthen compliance with the Leahy laws and implementation of State's human rights vetting process and to help ensure that U.S. funded assistance is not provided to Egyptian security forces that have committed gross violations of human rights, as State works to implement a revised version of the International Vetting and Security Tracking system (INVEST) system that is expected</p>	<p>State agreed with this recommendation. State acknowledged challenges identifying recipients of equipment across the range of assistance activities, but noted that it would continue to update its systems and procedures to facilitate human rights vetting for recipients of equipment. In April 2017, State reported that it had provided finalized guidance on vetting Egyptian recipients of Foreign Military Financing-funded equipment to Embassy Cairo. These procedures have been incorporated into a revised version of Embassy Cairo's guide for conducting</p>

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	<p>to help facilitate equipment vetting, the Secretary of State should develop time frames for establishing corresponding policies and procedures to implement a vetting process to help enable the U.S. government to provide a more reasonable level of assurance that equipment is not transferred to foreign security forces, including those in Egypt, when there is credible information that a unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.</p>	<p>human rights vetting. According to State, Embassy Cairo has implemented these procedures. Also, as of June 2017, State had added new features to INVEST to help facilitate vetting of equipment recipients. However, as of June 2017, State had not developed plans for adopting the procedures used in Egypt more broadly in other countries that also receive equipment through the Foreign Military Financing account or through other U.S. assistance programs. In addition, State had not established requirements for posts to use the new equipment vetting features in INVEST. In January 2018, State reported that it had developed draft standard operating procedures for conducting equipment vetting globally; however these procedures are being reviewed internally within the department and are not expected to be finalized until later in 2018. We will continue to monitor agency efforts to implement this recommendation.</p>
<p>GAO-16-468 Information Technology: Federal Agencies Need to Address Aging Legacy Systems</p>	<p>5. To address obsolete IT investments in need of modernization or replacement, the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, State, the Treasury, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs; the Attorney General; and the Commissioner of Social Security should direct their respective agency CIOs to identify and plan to modernize or replace legacy systems as needed and consistent with OMB's draft guidance, including time frames, activities to be performed, and functions to be replaced or enhanced.</p>	<p>The agency agreed with the recommendation and stated that it plans to work with OMB upon the publication of OMB's guidance to identify opportunities for modernization. Since, the agency has stated that it had extended plans to replace the systems mentioned in the report by several years. As of August 2017, the agency stated that it had finalized a new capital planning guide which includes investment review policy to identify opportunities for modernization and away from legacy systems. However, this guide is not a legacy system modernization plan and does not include time frames, activities to be performed, and functions to be replaced or enhanced. Further, as of January 2018, OMB has not issued its draft guidance on legacy systems. We will continue to monitor the implementation of this recommendation.</p>
<p>GAO-17-124 Diplomatic Security: State Should Enhance Its Management of Transportation-Related Risks to Overseas U.S. Personnel</p>	<p>6. To enhance State's efforts to manage transportation-related security risks overseas, the Secretary of State should direct the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) to create consolidated guidance for RSOs that specifies required elements to include in post travel notification and transportation security policies. For example, as part of its current effort to develop standard templates for certain security directives, DS could develop templates for transportation security and travel notification policies that specify the elements required in all security directives as recommended by the February 2005 Iraq ARB as well as the standard transportation-related</p>	<p>State concurred with this recommendation and provided an update in April 2017 describing its plans to address the recommendation. However, as of January 2018, State had not completed the described actions. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.</p>

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	elements that DS requires in such policies.	
	7. To enhance State's efforts to manage transportation-related security risks overseas, the Secretary of State should direct DS to clarify whether or not the FAH's armored vehicle policy for overseas posts is that every post must have sufficient armored vehicles, and if DS determines that the policy does not apply to all posts, articulate the conditions under which it does not apply.	State concurred with this recommendation and provided an update in April 2017 describing its plans to address the recommendation. However, as of January 2018, State had not completed the described actions. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.
	8. To enhance State's efforts to manage transportation-related security risks overseas, the Secretary of State should direct DS to develop monitoring procedures to ensure that all posts comply with the FAH's armored vehicle policy for overseas posts once the policy is clarified.	State concurred with this recommendation and provided an update in April 2017 describing its plans to address the recommendation. However, as of January 2018, State had not completed the described actions. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.
	9. To enhance State's efforts to manage transportation-related security risks overseas, the Secretary of State should direct DS to clarify existing guidance on refresher training, such as by delineating how often refresher training should be provided at posts facing different types and levels of threats, which personnel should receive refresher training, and how the completion of refresher training should be documented.	State concurred with this recommendation and provided an update in April 2017 describing its plans to address the recommendation. However, as of January 2018, State had not completed the described actions. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.
	10. To enhance State's efforts to manage transportation-related security risks overseas, the Secretary of State should direct DS to improve guidance for RSOs, in coordination with other relevant State offices and non-State agencies as appropriate, on how to promote timely communication of threat information to post personnel and timely receipt of such information by post personnel.	State concurred with this recommendation and provided an update in April 2017 describing its plans to address the recommendation. However, as of January 2018, State had not completed the described actions. We will continue to monitor State's progress in implementing this recommendation.
Non-Priority Recommendations		
GAO-15-194 Defense Base Act Insurance: State Department Should Evaluate Its Open Market System and Incorporate	11. The Secretary of State should direct State's Office of the Procurement Executive to incorporate leading practices into any future single insurer solicitations by determining whether existing guidance could be used, or	The Department of State concurred with the recommendation and said it would incorporate leading practices into any future single insurer solicitation if a determination is made to pursue a single insurer program. However, as of April 2018 State had not made a determination to pursue a single insurer program. GAO will continue to

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Leading Practices into Any Future Single Insurer Solicitation	by developing guidance based on leading practices in federal and State Department acquisition regulations and State internal control standards.	monitor State's effort to implement the recommendation.
GAO-15-265 Summer Work Travel Program: State Department Has Taken Steps to Strengthen Program Requirements, but Additional Actions Could Further Enhance Oversight	12. To enhance State's efforts to protect SWT participants from abuse and the SWT program from misuse, the Secretary of State should direct the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs to establish a mechanism to ensure that sponsors provide complete and consistent lists of fees that participants must pay.	In response to our recommendation that the State Department (State) establish a mechanism to ensure that sponsor provide complete and consistent lists of fees that exchange visitors on the Summer Work Travel program must pay, State acknowledged it collected such fee information in 2016. As April 19, 2018, we are awaiting State's review and analysis of this information to ensure the price lists are consistent and comprehensive, as well as published guidance it is sending to sponsors on how fee and cost information must be listed on their websites so that there will be consistency among sponsors. Additionally, we are seeking the timeframe for updating the websites with this fee information.
	13. To enhance State's efforts to protect SWT participants from abuse and the SWT program from misuse, the Secretary of State should direct the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs to establish a mechanism to establish a mechanism to ensure that information about these participant fees is made publicly available.	In response to our recommendation that the State Department (State) establish a mechanism to ensure that information about Summer Work Travel participant fees is made publically available, State noted that it had published a notice for proposed rulemaking on January 12, 2017. When finalized, this would require would require each sponsor to include in its recruiting material, and post on its main Web site (e.g., with a visible link to such a page on the sponsors homepage), examples of the typical monthly budgets of exchange visitors placed in various regions of the United States to illustrate wages (based on the required weekly minimum of 32-hours of work at a typical host placement) balanced against itemized fees and estimated costs. Until State finalizes this rule, they cannot enforce this requirement. As of April 19, 2018 State has not released the final rule.
	14. To enhance State's efforts to protect SWT participants from abuse and the SWT program from misuse, the Secretary of State should direct the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs to establish detailed criteria that will allow State to assess the sufficiency and appropriateness of opportunities for cultural activities outside the workplace that sponsors provide to SWT participants.	In response to our recommendation that the State Department (State) establish detailed criteria that will allow it to assess the sufficiency and appropriateness of opportunities for cultural activities outside the workplace that sponsors provide to Summer Work Travel participants, State published a notice for proposed rulemaking on January 12, 2017. When finalized, this would require sponsors and their host entities to create cultural opportunities at least once per month. The proposed rule also notes that State will issue guidance outlining best practices for cross-cultural programming. As of April 19, 2018 this is not finalized.
GAO-15-288 Critical Technologies: Agency Initiatives Address Some Weaknesses, but	15. To ensure a consistent and more collaborative approach to the protection of critical technologies, the Secretaries of Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security,	In Sept. 2017, State provided updates on actions taken within the department, but none across affected agencies.

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Additional Interagency Collaboration Is Needed	State, and the Treasury; as well as the Attorney General of the United States, who have lead and stakeholder responsibilities for the eight programs within the critical technologies portfolio, should take steps to promote and strengthen collaboration mechanisms among their respective programs while ongoing initiatives are implemented and assessed. These steps need not be onerous; for example, they could include conducting an annual meeting to discuss their programs, including the technologies they are protecting, their programs' intent, any new developments or changes planned for their programs, as well as defining consistent critical technologies terminology and sharing important updates.	
GAO-15-431 Telecommunications: Agencies Need Better Controls to Achieve Significant Savings on Mobile Devices and Services	16. To help the department effectively manage spending on mobile devices and services, the Secretary of State should ensure an inventory of mobile devices and services is established department-wide (i.e., all components' devices and associated services are accounted for).	The Department of State has not yet implemented this recommendation. The department stated that it transitioned its mobile devices and services to the General Services Administration's Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative as of September 2017. However, as of November 2017, the department had not demonstrated that it has established a department-wide inventory of mobile devices and services.
	17. To help the department effectively manage spending on mobile devices and services, the Secretary of State should ensure a reliable department-wide inventory of mobile service contracts is maintained.	The Department of State has not yet implemented this recommendation. The department stated that it transitioned its mobile devices and services to the General Services Administration's Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative as of September 2017. However, as of November 2017, the department had not demonstrated that it had addressed the recommendation.
	18. To help the department effectively manage spending on mobile devices and services, the Secretary of State should ensure procedures to monitor and control spending are established department-wide. Specifically, ensure that (1) procedures include assessing devices for zero, under, and over usage; (2) personnel with authority and responsibility for performing the procedures are identified; and (3) the specific steps to be taken to perform the process are documented.	The Department of State has not implemented this recommendation. In November 2017, the department stated that it had implemented a process to identify mobile lines with no usage; however, the department has not provided evidence that it has established procedures that address the elements of our recommendation. We will continue to monitor the department's progress in implementing this recommendation.
GAO-15-519 Nonproliferation: State Should Minimize Reporting Delays That	19. The Secretary of State should reconsider State's INKSNA process to ensure that it (1) complies with INKSNA's 6-month reporting cycle, and (2) minimizes delays in its	In its written comments on the draft report, the Department of State concurred with our recommendation while expressing concerns about what it referred to as the inherent difficulties of producing 2006 Iran, North Korea, and Syria

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May Affect Sanctions on Trade with Iran, North Korea, and Syria	ability to opt to impose sanctions.	Nonproliferation Act (INKSNA) reports every six months as required by law. In a July 2016 letter, State noted that it had worked to minimize delays in its ability to impose sanctions pursuant to INKSNA reports and that it aims to eventually comply with INKSNA's six-month reporting cycle as it clears the existing backlog of INKSNA cases. Moreover, it noted that State had transmitted three INKSNA reports covering three years of activity (the latest covering calendar year 2013) within the last 18 months as evidence that it was making progress towards meeting the GAO recommendation. In 2017, State informed us that it was regularly reviewing lessons learned from previous reports and incorporating best practices into follow-on iterations of INKSNA reports. For example, it informed us, it had now streamlined the decision-making process to reduce the workload in making sanctions determinations by modifying the INKSNA decision and background memo to consolidate certain cases on which the interagency has achieved consensus recommendations, thereby simplifying the review and approval process. State reiterated its intention to eventually comply with INKSNA's six-month reporting cycle as it clears the existing backlog. GAO will continue monitoring State's efforts to fully implement the recommendation.
GAO-15-579 Managing for Results: Agencies Report Positive Effects of Data-Driven Reviews on Performance but Some Should Strengthen Practices	20. To help ensure that agency review processes provide frequent, regular opportunities to assess progress on agency priority goals (APG), and are conducted in a manner consistent with GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) requirements, OMB guidance, and leading practices, the Secretary of State should work with the COO and PIO to modify the Department's review processes to ensure that progress on each APG is reviewed in an in-person review meeting at least quarterly.	According to information provided by State Department staff in March 2018, efforts to address this recommendation are currently on hold due to the department's leadership transition. Once new leadership is in place, staff indicated they would convey requirements for implementing these reviews. After leadership approves a desired approach, they told us they expect to implement it. We will continue to monitor the status of actions to address this recommendation.
	21. To help ensure that agency review processes provide frequent, regular opportunities to assess progress on agency priority goals (APG), and are conducted in a manner consistent with GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) requirements, OMB guidance, and leading practices, the Secretary of State should work with the COO and PIO to modify the Department's review processes to ensure that the reviews are led by the agency head or COO.	According to information provided by State Department staff in March 2018, efforts to address this recommendation are currently on hold due to the department's leadership transition. Once new leadership is in place, staff indicated they would convey requirements for implementing these reviews. After leadership approves a desired approach, they told us they expect to implement it. We will continue to monitor the status of actions to address this recommendation.
GAO-15-617	22. To improve the department's IT	The Department of State has not yet taken steps

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Information Technology Reform: Billions of Dollars in Savings Have Been Realized, but Agencies Need to Complete Reinvestment Plans	savings reinvestment plans, the Secretary of State should direct the CIO, as part of any future update to the department's IRM strategic plan or equivalent document, to include information regarding the approach to reinvesting savings from the consolidation of commodity IT resources (including data centers) in accordance with OMB's guidance.	to implement our recommendation. Specifically, as of May 2018, the agency had not yet updated its quarterly integrated data collection submission to the Office of Management and Budget to include information regarding the approach to reinvesting savings from the consolidation of commodity IT resources. In addition, the department has issued its FY 2017-2019 IT strategic plan; however this plan does not discuss how State would reinvest any resulting IT savings. The department expected to provide an update in the second quarter of 2018. We will continue to evaluate the department's progress in implementing this recommendation.
GAO-15-773 Nonimmigrant Visas: State Has Reduced Applicant Interview Wait Times, but Sustainability of Gains Is Uncertain	23. To further improve State's processing of nonimmigrant visas, the Secretary of State should evaluate the relative impact of efforts undertaken to reduce nonimmigrant visa interview wait times to help managers make informed future resource decisions.	According to State officials, as of October 2017, the Bureau of Consular Affairs has not completed an analysis of the impact of process or program changes on adjudicator productivity using wait times as a metric.
GAO-16-323 Data Center Consolidation: Agencies Making Progress, but Planned Savings Goals Need to Be Established [Reissued on March 4, 2016]	24. The Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs; the Attorney General of the United States; the Administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and U.S. Agency for International Development; the Director of the Office of Personnel Management; the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration should take action to improve progress in the data center optimization areas that we reported as not meeting OMB's established targets, including addressing any identified challenges.	The Department of State agreed with our recommendation, and has taken initial steps to implement it. In June 2016, the department stated in correspondence to GAO that it planned to follow the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) guidance on optimizing data centers and would take action to improve the defined areas that Data Center Optimization Initiative identifies. However, as of April 2018, the department reports on OMB's IT Dashboard that it meets only one (power usage efficiency) of the five data center optimization metric targets that OMB currently requires agencies to report against. The department reported that it does not meet the remaining four targets (related to server utilization and monitoring, energy metering, server virtualization, and data center facility space). We will continue to monitor and evaluate the department's progress in implementing this recommendation.
GAO-16-494 IT Dashboard: Agencies Need to Fully Consider Risks When Rating Their Major Investments	25. To better ensure that the Dashboard ratings more accurately reflect risk, the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, the Interior, State, and Veterans Affairs; and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management should direct their	The Department agreed with the recommendation, and, in an October 2017 response, stated that it currently evaluates risk as part of its IT governance activities. However, the department has not yet provided supporting documentation. When we confirm what actions have been taken, we will update the status.

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	CIOs to factor active risks into their IT Dashboard CIO ratings.	
	26. To better ensure that the Dashboard ratings more accurately reflect risk, the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, State, Transportation, the Treasury, Veterans Affairs; the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration should direct their CIOs to ensure that their CIO ratings reflect the level of risk facing an investment relative to that investment's ability to accomplish its goals.	The Department agreed with the recommendation, but has not yet provided supporting documentation. When we confirm what actions have been taken, we will update the status.
GAO-16-511 Information Technology: Agencies Need to Improve Their Application Inventories to Achieve Additional Savings	27. To improve federal agencies' efforts to rationalize their portfolio of applications, the heads of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs; and heads of the Environmental Protection Agency; National Aeronautics and Space Administration; National Science Foundation; Nuclear Regulatory Commission; Office of Personnel Management; Small Business Administration; Social Security Administration; and U.S. Agency for International Development should direct their Chief Information Officers (CIOs) and other responsible officials to improve their inventories by taking steps to fully address the practices we identified as being partially met or not met.	We reported that the Department of State partially met the following software application inventory practices: (1) specifies basic application attributes; and (2) is regularly updated with quality controls to ensure reliability. Specifically, we reported that while the inventory included basic application attributes (e.g. name, description), it did not include the business function for the majority of inventory entries. Further, we reported that the agency did not provide evidence that quality control processes were in place to ensure the reliability of the data in the inventory. In July 2017, department officials stated that the department recently began a department-wide data call to obtain information on all IT assets and applications from each bureau, including aligning the assets and applications to a business function. Further, officials stated that they plan to analyze the results against their current data to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the IT asset inventory. Officials stated that they expect to complete this effort in early 2018. We plan to continue to monitor the department's efforts.
GAO-16-645 Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Existing Federal Efforts to Increase Awareness Should Be Improved	28. To increase awareness of the health and legal consequences of FGM/C among visa recipients, the Secretary of State should update the Foreign Affairs Manual to require posts located in countries where FGM/C is commonly practiced to directly provide information about FGM/C to nonimmigrant visa recipients in the same manner as is done for immigrant visa recipients.	The Department of State (State) concurred with this recommendation, and noted in a September 2016 update that it will expand the pool of visa applicants who will receive information on FGM/C. Specifically, once its transition to providing paperwork electronically during the visa application process is complete, State will directly distribute the fact sheet on FGM/C to both immigrant and nonimmigrant visa recipients. According to State, both immigrant and nonimmigrant visa recipients will have to certify that they have read and understood the fact sheet on FGM/C before signing and submitting their

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		respective visa applications. As of April 2018, State has completed these actions for nonimmigrant visas, but has not yet completed these actions for immigrant visas.
	29. To increase awareness of the health and legal consequences of FGM/C among visa recipients, the Secretary of State should update the Foreign Affairs Manual to require posts located outside of the countries where FGM/C is commonly practiced to directly provide information on FGM/C to immigrant and nonimmigrant visa recipients who are nationals of countries where FGM/C is commonly practiced.	The Department of State (State) concurred with this recommendation, and noted in a September 2016 update that it will expand the pool of visa applicants who will receive information on FGM/C. Specifically, once its transition to providing paperwork electronically during the visa application process is complete, State will directly distribute the fact sheet on FGM/C to both immigrant and nonimmigrant visa recipients who are from or were nationals of a country where FGM/C is commonly practiced. State noted that this change will ensure the widest distribution possible by providing all individuals from countries where FGM/C is commonly practiced with access to the fact sheet on FGM/C regardless of place of application or visa recipient type. As of April 2018, State has completed these actions for nonimmigrant visas, but has not yet completed these actions for immigrant visas.
GAO-16-686 Federal Chief Information Security Officers: Opportunities Exist to Improve Roles and Address Challenges to Authority	30. To ensure that the role of the CISO is defined in department policy in accordance with FISMA 2014, the Secretary of State should define the CISO's role in department policy for ensuring that the department has procedures for incident detection, response, and reporting.	The Department of State (State) concurred with this recommendation. We are currently reviewing the evidence provided by State to determine whether the role of the CISO has been defined in its policy for ensuring that State has procedures for incident detection, response, and reporting.
GAO-16-717 Combating Wildlife Trafficking: Agencies Are Taking a Range of Actions, but the Task Force Lacks Performance Targets for Assessing Progress	31. To provide a basis for comparing actual results with intended results that can generate more meaningful performance information, the Secretaries of the Interior and State and the Attorney General of the United States should jointly work with the Task Force to develop performance targets related to the <i>National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking Implementation Plan</i> .	Agencies agreed with recommendation and plan to implement it. As of Feb 12, 2018, agencies indicated that they remain committed to implementation and may distribute indicator recommendations and guidance by May 2018.
GAO-16-768 Foreign Assistance: Actions Needed to Improve Transparency and Quality of Data on ForeignAssistance.gov	32. To improve the quality of the data published on ForeignAssistance.gov and help ensure consistency in published information, the Secretary of State should, in consultation with the Director of OMB and the USAID Administrator, undertake a review of the efforts to date on ensuring data quality.	State concurred with this recommendation and noted that it will continue to work with USAID in consultation with OMB to assess whether additional existing resources are required to meet the goals of ForeignAssistance.gov. As of June 2017, State has taken some steps to coordinate with OMB and USAID to improve the quality of data reported for ForeignAssistance.gov. For example, in January 2017, State co-hosted an interagency meeting with OMB and USAID to discuss data quality and reporting requirements. As of February 2018, GAO was following up with State to obtain additional information on how the

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
		established review process would or has helped improve the quality of the data reported on Foreignassistance.gov.
	33. To improve the quality of the data published on ForeignAssistance.gov and help ensure consistency in published information, the Secretary of State should, in consultation with the Director of OMB and the USAID Administrator, develop additional guidance that takes into consideration current challenges to updating Foreign Assistance.gov with verified data.	As of June 2017, State has taken some steps to coordinate with OMB and USAID to improve the quality of data reported for ForeignAssistance.gov. For example, in January 2017, State co-hosted an interagency meeting with OMB and USAID to discuss data quality and reporting requirements. As of February 2018, GAO was following up with State to determine if additional guidance has been developed that takes into consideration current challenges to updating ForeignAssistance.gov with verified data.
GAO-17-201 Cuba: U.S. Policy Changes Increased Engagement with Private Sector, but Agency Information Collection Is Limited	34. To ensure that all relevant U.S. agencies have information on the effect of changes in U.S. policy related to Cuba, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Department of Commerce, Department of the Treasury, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other relevant agencies, should take steps to identify and begin to collect the information that would allow them to monitor changes in economic engagement, including with the Cuban private sector.	State concurred with this recommendation. In April 2017, State reported that it was taking steps to identify and collect information that would enable it to monitor the Cuban economy and changes in the economic environment, including with the Cuban private sector. For example, State noted that Embassy Havana had developed a plan for in-country travel and reporting by identifying key sectors and provinces that could provide additional insights on the Cuban economy. As of July 2017, State reported that the U.S. government had paused most bilateral engagement with the Cuban government while the incoming presidential administration conducted an interagency policy review. However, State noted that during this time the U.S. embassy in Havana produced several analytic cables discussing developments in the Cuban economy. With the release of the administration's National Security Presidential Memorandum "Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba" in June 2017, State reported that it would work to implement this policy and would monitor developments in U.S. engagement with the private sector and Cuban economic trends. As of November 2017, State said that it was consulting with interagency partners on developments impacting the Cuban private sector and that it was working with other U.S. agencies to determine how to most effectively redirect resources away from the Cuban government and towards the private sector as called for in the administration's Cuba policy. However, State also noted that operations at Embassy Havana had been significantly affected by Hurricane Irma and the health attacks against U.S. diplomats in Cuba. According to State, the Secretary of State's September 2017 order for all non-emergency U.S. personnel to depart Cuba had limited the ability of Embassy Havana to report on developments there, but that the department would continue to monitor and report on Cuba's private sector to the greatest extent possible and as resources permitted. As of April 2018, State

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
<p>GAO-17-56 Human Trafficking: State Has Made Improvements in Its Annual Report but Does Not Explicitly Explain Certain Tier Rankings or Changes</p>	<p>35. To improve the transparency and clarity of the <i>Trafficking in Persons Report</i> and improve its usefulness as a diplomatic tool to encourage countries to address trafficking, the Secretary of State should improve explanations in narratives for Tier 1 rankings, including using consistent language, as feasible, in the <i>Trafficking in Persons Report</i>.</p>	<p>reported that it had not taken further action to implement the recommendation. GAO will continue to monitor State's efforts to implement this recommendation.</p> <p>In comments on the draft report, State concurred with this recommendation and said that it seeks to make the Trafficking in Persons Report as useful as possible to a broad array of stakeholders and will continue its commitment to ensure each narrative better serves this purpose. GAO analyzed State's 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report and found improvements in the explanations in narratives for Tier 1 countries. However, narratives for some Tier 1 countries did not clearly explain their placement, including language that seemed contradictory to certain standards and criteria and ambiguous language that meant we were unable to determine how State had determined whether certain standards and criteria were met. In April 2018, State stated that it remains committed to ensuring the Trafficking in Persons Report is as accurate and consistent as possible and has made it a priority in the production of the 2018 TIP Report to address any inconsistencies contained in past reports. GAO will continue to monitor State's efforts to fully implement the recommendation.</p>
	<p>36. To improve the transparency and clarity of the <i>Trafficking in Persons Report</i> and improve its usefulness as a diplomatic tool to encourage countries to address trafficking, the Secretary of State should take actions, such as tracking the recommendations in the <i>Trafficking in Persons Report</i>, to assess the effectiveness of the report as a tool to encourage countries to address human trafficking.</p>	<p>In comments on the draft report, State concurred with this recommendation and described steps it is taking to more systematically assess the effectiveness of the Trafficking in Persons Report in encouraging governments to address human trafficking, including the recent establishment of a monitoring and evaluation position in the Trafficking Office. In addition, State hired a performance measurement specialist in December 2016. In April 2018, State stated it is working to expand its formal monitoring of the Report's impact by measuring and evaluating its impact, which will include identifying specific objectives and indicators against which to do so. State said it has also included an impact assessment into its budgeting for future years to ensure the necessary resources are requested or otherwise dedicated to assessing the impact of the Trafficking in Persons Report. GAO will continue to monitor State's implementation efforts.</p>

Legend:

ARB=Accountability Review Board; CIO=Chief Information Officer; CISO=Chief Information Security Officer; COO=Chief Operating Officer; DS=Bureau of Diplomatic Security; FAH=Foreign Affairs Handbooks; FGM/C=Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting; GPRA=Government Performance and Results Act of 1993; INKSNA=Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act; IRM=Information Resource Management; OMB=Office of Management and Budget; PIO=Performance Improvement Officer; RSO=Regional Security Officer; SWT=Summer Work Travel.

Source: GAO. | GAO-18-532R

Note: One of the open recommendations to State is included in the numerical count provided in this report; however, that recommendation has been deemed by State to be sensitive but unclassified; thus, it is not included in this table.

ENCLOSURE II: GAO Recommendations Made to the U.S. Agency for International Development in Calendar Years 2015 and 2016 That Remained Open as of June 7, 2018

Product number and title	Recommendation text	Status summary
Non-Priority Recommendations		
<p>GAO-15-479 <i>International Education Assistance: USAID Has Implemented Primary Grade Reading Programs but Has Not Yet Measured Progress toward Its Strategic Goal</i></p>	<p>1. To improve USAID's ability to measure progress in achieving a quantitative reading goal in any future education strategy, the Acting USAID Administrator should ensure that the future strategy includes targets that will allow USAID to monitor interim progress toward its goal in comparison with planned performance.</p>	<p>In written comments on the report, USAID agreed to implement GAO's recommendation. USAID told GAO in August 2015 that a new Education Strategy will continue to focus on primary grade reading through 2020. The current strategy was scheduled to end in December 2015. USAID noted that as it expands its body of knowledge surrounding achievements of current reading projects, it will be better able to set achievable project and country level targets and report interim progress toward the new strategy's aggregate primary grade reading goal. On December 22, 2017, USAID announced that it extended the USAID Education Strategy 2011-2015 to December 31, 2018, or until a new strategy is approved, whichever is sooner. According to a USAID official, USAID extended the timeline for completion of a new strategy to allow additional time to align it with new congressional requirements established in the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act, which became law on September 8, 2017, enacted as Division A of the broader PL 115-56, "Continuing Appropriations Act, 2018 and Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2017." The READ Act requires submission to Congress by September 8, 2018 of a "Comprehensive Integrated United States Strategy to Promote Basic Education" to be carried out during the following five fiscal years "to promote quality basic education in partner countries by: first seeking to equitably expand access to basic education for all children, particularly marginalized children and vulnerable groups; and second, measurably improving the quality of basic education and learning outcomes." We will continue to monitor this recommendation</p>
<p>GAO-15-732 <i>International Food Assistance: USAID Should Systematically Assess the Effectiveness of Key Conditional Food Aid Activities</i></p>	<p>2. To strengthen USAID's ability to monitor Title II conditional food aid and evaluate food-for-assets activities' impact on reducing food insecurity, the USAID Administrator should systematically assess the effectiveness of food-for-assets activities in development projects in achieving project goals and objectives.</p>	<p>In written comments on our draft report, USAID concurred with the recommendation. In September 2016, USAID stated that it had undertaken relevant reviews of the effectiveness and sustainability of Title II development projects and that it is considering expanding evaluations of completed projects to assess sustainability of results over time. As of April 2018, GAO continues to monitor USAID's efforts to fully address the recommendation.</p>

Source: GAO. | GAO-18-532R



United States Department of State
Comptroller
Washington, DC 20520

May 23, 2018

Charles M. Johnson, Jr.
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Johnson:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "State and USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2015 and 2016" GAO Job Code 102720.

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

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Julianne Shinnick, Director, GAO Liaison Office, Bureau of Comptroller and Global Financial Services at (202) 647-8170.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris H. Flaggs".

Christopher H. Flaggs

Enclosure:
As stated

cc: OIG - Norman Brown

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

STATE AND USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2015 and 2016 (GAO-18-532R)

Thank you for providing the Department with the opportunity to respond to this GAO draft correspondence. In response to the same congressional mandate, the Department is finalizing its own report on actions taken, or to be taken, on these GAO recommendations. We value the recommendations resulting from the work of the GAO as they identify ways to improve our programs and operations.

The Department has a collaborative and robust liaison relationship with the GAO. We will continue to provide GAO with quarterly updates as we work together to assure that their recommendations are closed as quickly as possible.



MAY 18 2018

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr
Managing Director
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Re: State and USAID: Status of Recommendations Made by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2015 and 2016 (GAO-18-532R)

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I am pleased to provide the formal response of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to the draft report of the GAO entitled, "*State and USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2015 and 2016*" (GAO-18-532R).

USAID is proud of the efforts we have made to carry out the GAO's recommendations over the past few years, which have produced the 90-percent implementation rate indicated in the report. USAID takes each of GAO's recommendation very seriously, as we recognize the importance of improving the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of USAID's operations while respecting the taxpayers' investments in development. USAID is committed to implementing the outstanding recommendations, and to complying with any requests for additional documentation.

I am transmitting this letter and the enclosed USAID comments for incorporation as an appendix to the final report. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while conducting this engagement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angelique M. Crumbly", is written over the typed name.

Angelique M. Crumbly
Acting Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

**COMMENTS BY THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID) ON THE DRAFT REPORT
OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO)
ENTITLED,
“State and USAID: Status of GAO Recommendations Made in 2015 and 2016
(GAO-18-532R)”**

USAID would like to thank the GAO for giving us the opportunity to respond to this draft report. USAID has made it a corporate priority to carry out GAO’s recommendations, as proven by our 90-percent implementation rate within the time period covered by the report. Under instructions from Administrator Mark Green, we take every recommendation seriously as an opportunity to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of USAID’s operations while respecting the taxpayers’ investments in development. Furthermore, we remain committed to implementing the GAO’s outstanding recommendations, and anticipate their complete closure by the end of calendar year 2018.

In response to each one of the outstanding recommendations, we would like to provide the following updates:

Recommendation GAO 15-479: To improve USAID's ability to measure progress in achieving a quantitative reading goal in any future education strategy, the Acting USAID Administrator should ensure that the future strategy includes targets that will allow USAID to monitor interim progress toward its goal in comparison with planned performance. (Rec. 3)

In December 2017, USAID extended the USAID Education Strategy 2011-2015 to December 31, 2018, or until the approval by the Administrator of a new strategy. USAID made this decision to allow additional time to align our next Agency-wide vision for education programming with new requirements established by Congress in the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act, which became law on September 8, 2017. The READ Act requires submission to Congress by September 8, 2018, of a Comprehensive Integrated U.S. Strategy to Promote Basic Education for implementation over the following five Fiscal Years.

To complement the Comprehensive Integrated U.S. Strategy to Promote Basic Education, USAID will develop a USAID-specific Education Policy, rather than a separate strategy. Based on our experience in implementing the Education Strategy since 2011, we believe a policy document will be more aligned with a country-driven, context-specific approach to supporting education systems in countries on their journey to self-reliance. The policy document will establish priority outcome areas and principles for the sector, including a new emphasis on education delivered through non-governmental channels, but not set global, top-down targets as recommended in the GAO audit. Nevertheless, the policy will emphasize the need to establish metrics for our education programs, and to measure the performance of our implementing partners against them.

According to Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter 200 - Development Policy: "USAID development policies articulate the Agency's corporate position and set a specific priority direction for a sectoral or cross-cutting goal or issue consistent with USG and Administrator directives. These policies can seek to change the way the Agency programs in key areas, but do not set specific time-bound targets." This calls into question whether the GAO recommendation is still applicable, given that USAID does not intend to issue a new education strategy with global targets.

USAID therefore requests that GAO extend the deadline for this recommendation to December 31, 2018, to allow for the completion of the Comprehensive Integrated U.S. Strategy to Promote Basic Education required by the READ Act and USAID's policy document on education programming, and to consider the recommendation closed when the two documents are approved.

Recommendations GAO 15-732: To strengthen USAID's ability to monitor Title II conditional food aid and evaluate food-for-assets activities' impact on reducing food insecurity, the USAID Administrator should systematically assess the effectiveness of food-for-assets activities in development projects in achieving project goals and objectives. (Rec. 2)

USAID has built out our strategy and tools to assess the effectiveness of food-for-assets (FFA) activities in development projects, in line with the GAO's

recommendation. In June 2016, USAID submitted a request to the GAO to close this recommendation, in which we detailed some of the key processes the Agency had undertaken to monitor and assess FFA programs. Following the closure request, USAID released additional Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting for FFA activities, as well as Technical References. To enhance its monitoring-and-evaluation capacity, USAID also established a new mechanism to contract for independent baseline studies and evaluations of these programs. USAID shared these updates, among others, with the GAO in March 2018, and still awaits closure of this recommendation.

Recommendation GAO 16-323: The Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs; the Attorney General of the United States; the Administrators of the Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and U.S. Agency for International Development; the Director of the Office of Personnel Management; the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; and the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration should take action to improve progress in the data center optimization areas that we reported as not meeting OMB's established targets, including addressing any identified challenges. (Rec.1)

In September 2017, USAID submitted a request to the GAO to close this recommendation, and provided evidence of the steps the Agency had taken in the area of data centers. Subsequent to submitting our closure request, we learned of an additional target established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that was not applicable at the time the GAO completed its audit. We intend to meet with the GAO to discuss our closure request and how to account for the additional metric.

Recommendation GAO 16-629: To improve the financial oversight of U.S. programs to provide humanitarian assistance to people inside Syria, the USAID Administrator should use risk assessments submitted by implementing partners to inform USAID oversight activities, for example, using information from

assessments to ensure that control activities for programs are designed to mitigate identified risks. (Rec. 2)

USAID has undertaken the relevant steps to implement this recommendation, and is using risk-assessments submitted by the implementing partners in our Syria programs to inform our oversight activities and mitigate identified risks.

In early 2018, USAID submitted to the GAO evidence of the steps we have taken in this regard, and we are awaiting closure of the recommendation.

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