

GAO

United States General Accounting Office
Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Oversight and Investigations,
Committee on Energy and Commerce,
House of Representatives

May 1992

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Agency Travel Funds Adequate, Except State Department Role Decreased



146959

**RESTRICTED--Not to be released outside the
General Accounting Office unless specifically
approved by the Office of Congressional
Relations.**

RELEASED



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Resources, Community, and
Economic Development Division

B-246537

May 12, 1992

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

You have expressed concern that to support the increasing number of international environmental meetings and negotiations, agencies may have "raided" funds intended for program operations to pay for international travel. You were specifically interested in the adequacy of travel funding for international environmental meetings and negotiations for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Department of State.

Results in Brief

Overall, travel funds are adequate for the agencies to send representatives to the most important international meetings on the environment.

Between fiscal years 1986 and 1990, travel funds at EPA, NOAA, and Energy increased in constant dollars.¹ According to agency officials and information we reviewed, these funds are generally adequate to support U.S. participation in international meetings and negotiations on environmental issues. Although funds for agency operations have been used to pay for foreign travel, the amounts do not appear to be significant enough to support concerns that program funds are being raided. At NOAA and Energy, for example, international travel accounts for less than 1 percent of the total agency budget.

In contrast, State Department funding available for travel to international environmental meetings and conferences decreased between fiscal years 1985 and 1990. State Department officials said that they are able to attend important or critical meetings and negotiations, but that funding limitations had frequently restricted their travel. At some of the meetings that they did not attend, multilateral or transboundary issues about which State Department officials are knowledgeable were discussed. These

¹All dollars in this report are shown in 1982 constant dollars adjusted using the Gross National Product Implicit Price Deflator.

travel fund limitations have increased the Department's reliance on officials from other agencies to represent U.S. interests.

Background

International attention to environmental problems has increased during the last decade. Of the 170 international environmental agreements in which the United States participates or has an interest, about one-half were reached during the 1980s. Many more international agreements dealing with important environmental issues—such as global climate change, marine and atmospheric pollution, deforestation, and biological diversity—are being developed.

The United States is perceived as a leader in international environmental efforts. That strong role is exercised, in part, through U.S. officials' attendance at meetings and negotiating conferences around the world. U.S. representation at these meetings and conferences is important if this nation is to maintain its leadership in developing and carrying out international environmental agreements.

The State Department has overall responsibility for policies and proposals concerning the environmental aspects of U.S. foreign affairs. The Department's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) has direct responsibility for these matters. To carry out OES' responsibilities, OES staff, among other things, (1) evaluate and assess all domestic and international issues that bear on U.S. foreign policy and all proposed actions related to U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, (2) provide advice and coordination on U.S. policy and define policy options, (3) negotiate conventions and agreements, (4) participate in international organizations and advance U.S. positions in various forums, (5) oversee bilateral environmental agreements and cooperative programs, and (6) ensure that the United States complies with directives, legislation, and treaty and agreement obligations pertaining to the environment. Various executive agencies with technical expertise in specific environmental areas also assist OES in carrying out these responsibilities.

Other executive agencies may also be given the "lead" responsibility for representing U.S. interests or elements of these interests in specific international forums. In areas related to the environment, for instance, NOAA represents the United States on the International Whaling Commission, the Coast Guard represents the United States in the International Maritime Organization, and the Department of the Interior

represents the United States in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. In other instances, agencies may be called upon to represent U.S. interests only at specific meetings. EPA, for example, led a U.S. delegation to a meeting on waste management sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. These designations occur when the subject of concern falls within an agency's area of expertise.

When other agencies are given primary responsibility for representing U.S. interests in international organizations, programs, and conferences, OES staff are responsible for advising the delegates and coordinating and monitoring their activities. In addition, the Congress has, in some cases, provided the executive agencies with international mandates related to statutes that they administer. For example, several statutes that EPA administers—the Clean Air Act; the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act; and the Toxic Substances Control Act—have specific international provisions.

Travel Funds Are Adequate at EPA, Energy, and NOAA

Funds for travel to meetings on international environmental issues generally have been adequate, according to officials at EPA, Energy, and NOAA. These agency officials reported that both the number of meetings on international environmental issues and the demand for travel funds to attend these meetings have increased in recent years. Although they could not document the extent of this increase, the officials did identify expanded agency efforts in a number of recent international environmental areas, including, for example, global warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, air and water pollution, acid rain, and the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

The amounts these agencies have spent on foreign travel have also increased. Overall and foreign travel obligations for the three agencies between fiscal years 1986 and 1990 in constant 1982 dollars are shown in appendix I. This information shows that foreign travel obligations have increased at a faster rate than overall travel obligations. At Energy and NOAA, for example, between fiscal years 1986 and 1990, the amounts obligated for foreign travel increased by about 79 and 29 percent, respectively. During that same period, overall travel obligations at Energy increased by about 12 percent and at NOAA by about 24 percent. At EPA, information on estimated foreign travel obligations was available only for fiscal years 1989 and 1990. During that period, estimated foreign travel

obligations increased by 67 percent, and overall travel obligations increased by 7 percent.

EPA and NOAA officials indicated that limitations on the availability of travel funds have occasionally restricted their participation in international environmental activities. In these cases, they either did not attend meetings or sent fewer representatives than they might have preferred. Energy officials indicated that in some isolated cases, foreign travel might have been limited because funding was not available, but they could not recall any specific instances. Limitations on the availability of travel funds and other restrictions affecting travel at these agencies are discussed in appendix II.

The need to fund international travel appears to have little impact on other agency programs. At EPA, program funds are not used for travel because the Congress annually establishes, as part of the budget and appropriation process, a ceiling limiting the amount that the agency can spend on travel. At Energy and NOAA, the effect that foreign travel funding could have on programs is limited, given the current level of foreign travel at the agencies. Spending for foreign travel at each of the agencies represents less than 1 percent of the total budget. Energy and NOAA officials also said that the need to fund foreign travel has generally not adversely affected programs. Additional details on the effect of foreign travel funding on other agency operations are discussed in appendix III.

Limits on Funds Available for Travel at the State Department Have Restricted Staff Participation

At the State Department, funding available for meetings on environmental issues has not increased as it has at the other agencies reviewed. According to OES officials, limitations on the availability of travel funds have restricted participation by State Department staff in international environmental activities. As a result, State Department staff said, they have limited their direct involvement to the most important or critical meetings and have relied increasingly on the staff of other agencies to represent U.S. interests at these meetings.

Available Funds Have Decreased

State Department funding available for travel for international environmental activities decreased between fiscal years 1985 and 1990. One primary source of travel funds is the operating expense allocation made by the Department to OES.² The other source is the International

²These funds are used for all operating expenses, including office supplies and equipment purchases, maintenance, and training as well as travel expenses. It does not include salaries, however. Within OES, travel expenses have accounted for about 30 percent of the total operating expense allocation.

Conferences and Contingencies appropriation administered by the Bureau for International Organization Affairs.³

In 1982 dollars, the operating expense allocation made available to OES between fiscal year 1985 and 1990 decreased by \$251,000, or about 16 percent, from \$1,541,000 to \$1,290,000. In contrast, the Department's Salaries and Expenses appropriation—the account from which the OES allocation is made—increased by about \$50 million, or about 4 percent, from about \$1.33 billion to \$1.38 billion. Over the past decade, the Department's Salaries and Expenses appropriation increased by 57 percent, while the OES allocation decreased by about 25 percent.

According to the Department's Director of the Office of Budget and Program Execution, OES allocations were affected by (1) the decline in the value of the dollar abroad since 1985, (2) increases in both American and foreign national salaries and benefits, (3) increased Department responsibilities arising from the establishment of new embassies and foreign missions, (4) increased rental costs and capital expenditures for domestic facilities, and (5) costs associated with providing support for an increased number of U.S. domestic agency employees stationed overseas. In addition to these factors, the Director said, more of the expenses of domestic bureaus such as OES, including travel expenses, are considered discretionary and therefore receive lower priority for additional funding in the fund allocation process than the post (i.e., overseas) operations of the regional bureaus.⁴

The International Conferences and Contingencies appropriation—the other primary source of travel funds—decreased by about 45 percent during this period, from about \$8.7 million in fiscal year 1985 to about \$4.8 million in fiscal year 1990. During the 1980s, the funding available from this source decreased by more than 50 percent overall. According to the Director of the Office of International Conferences, the decreased funding in this account resulted from Department efforts to reduce the number of delegates participating in international conferences and to comply with the requirements of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-177, Dec. 12, 1985).

³This appropriation provides funding for participation by the United States in official international conferences, including travel expenses. Through this appropriation, the Congress provides funds annually to finance accredited delegations to international conferences. An international conference is a scheduled meeting of officially designated representatives of at least three governments to the sponsoring international organization or its subsidiary.

⁴There are five regional bureaus: (1) African Affairs, (2) East Asian and Pacific Affairs, (3) European and Canadian Affairs, (4) Inter-American Affairs, and (5) Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.

Staff Attendance at International Meetings Has Been Limited

Office directors within OES said that they are generally able to attend the most important environmental negotiations but are often unable to attend the meetings leading up to negotiations and the quasi-academic or informal consultations sponsored by various international organizations. Attendance at some of these meetings can facilitate negotiations and improve agreements by providing U.S. negotiators with the opportunity to exchange ideas, advance U.S. positions, and meet informally with their negotiating counterparts prior to formal negotiations, according to one OES office director.

Staff within the Environmental and Ocean Affairs directorates of OES—the two primary directorates dealing with international environmental issues—identified meetings in each of their major areas of responsibility that they thought would have been advantageous for them to attend but that they did not attend because funds were not available. Such meetings were held on stratospheric ozone, long-range transboundary air pollution, deforestation and the development of forestry and tropical forest action plans, Arctic haze, acid rain, and development of the Antarctic treaty system.

For example, because of travel fund limitations, OES staff attended the meetings of only one of the three working groups—the group addressing response strategies—of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Funding limitations also precluded the staff person responsible for governmentwide coordination of the U.S. position for the 1992 United Nations-sponsored Conference on Environment and Development from attending any of the first three preparatory meetings that were held in Nairobi, Geneva, and New York.

When they are unable to attend meetings, OES staff rely on staff from other agencies to represent U.S. interests. According to OES staff, the representation of U.S. interests may appropriately be assigned to agencies other than the State Department. OES staff also said that staff and travel funding limitations have contributed increasingly to U.S. representation by staff of agencies other than the State Department.

When the staff of other agencies represent U.S. interests in international environmental conferences and negotiations, OES staff assume responsibility for advising these officials on the U.S. position and foreign policy objectives. According to OES staff, representatives from other agencies sometimes do not have the expertise to deal with multilateral or transboundary issues, or they may not completely understand a position's

ramifications on other issues, such as international trade or finance. In such instances, OES staff must take the time and make the effort to ensure that the staff of other agencies are adequately prepared to represent the U.S. interests for which the State Department is usually responsible.

The Deputy Assistant Secretaries for Ocean and Fisheries Affairs and for Environment, Health, and Natural Resources—the heads of the two primary directorates within OES responsible for international environmental issues—indicated that they could effectively use additional travel funds. They also said, however, that even with additional travel funds, State Department attendance at many important international meetings would be limited by the number of staff available.

Conclusions

Overall, travel funding appears to be adequate at EPA, NOAA, and Energy. The limited availability of travel funds at the State Department, however, has precluded State Department staff from participating in meetings on international environmental issues that the staff believe would have been valuable for them to attend. When State Department staff do not participate, officials of U.S. agencies with technical expertise in specific environmental issues are assigned to lead U.S. delegations and provide continuity of U.S. leadership. State Department officials work with officials of these other agencies to make sure that they are prepared to represent U.S. interests. State Department officials believe that the United States is generally well represented and that its foreign policy objectives are being met. Nevertheless, we believe that the limited funding for travel is cause for concern to the extent that it reduces State Department officials' opportunities to play a proactive role in international environmental activities.

Agency Comments

We discussed the material contained in this report with officials at EPA, Energy, NOAA, and the State Department, who agreed with our presentation of the facts. We incorporated their comments where appropriate. However, as agreed with your office, we did not obtain written agency comments on a draft of this report.

Scope and Methodology

To answer your concerns, we examined overall and foreign travel obligations at each of the agencies to determine trends and discussed the overall adequacy of travel funding with program officials at each agency. We reviewed relevant agency records, such as budget documents, travel

funding requests, and reports on international meetings and negotiations. However, these documents provided little insight into the availability of, and impact of limitations on, travel funding, and we therefore relied primarily on statements by agency officials. At the Department of Commerce, staff from NOAA, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the International Trade Administration travel to international environmental activities. However, because officials at the Institute and the Trade Administration estimated that such travel represented less than 10 percent of their total foreign travel, we limited our review to NOAA. Our work was conducted between September 1990 and October 1991 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

You also requested that we provide information on how the size and composition of delegations to international conferences are determined. This information is discussed in appendix IV.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies to the heads of the agencies involved and to other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others upon request.

Please contact me at (202) 275-6111 if you or your staff have any questions. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix V.

Sincerely yours,



Richard L. Hembra
Director, Environmental Protection
Issues

Contents

Letter		1
Appendix I		12
Overall and Foreign Travel Obligations for EPA, Energy, and NOAA Employees, Fiscal Years 1986-90		
Appendix II		13
The Availability of Travel Funds at EPA, NOAA, and Energy	Travel Fund Limitations Have Restricted Participation by EPA and NOAA	13
	Other Factors Have Limited Agency Participation	14
Appendix III		16
The Impact of Foreign Travel Funding Requirements on Programs at EPA, NOAA, and Energy		
Appendix IV		17
The Selection of Delegates to International Conferences	Delegation Size and Composition Are Controlled Only When Accreditation Is Required	17
	International Organizations and Individual Agencies Determine Attendance at Meetings Not Requiring Accreditation	19
Appendix V		20
Major Contributors to This Report		

Contents

Abbreviations

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ICC	International Conferences and Contingencies
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OES	Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Overall and Foreign Travel Obligations for EPA, Energy, and NOAA Employees, Fiscal Years 1986-90

Dollars in millions						
Fiscal year	EPA		Energy		NOAA	
	All travel ^a	Foreign travel	All travel	Foreign travel ^b	All travel	Foreign travel
1986	\$13.6	°	\$ 33.5	\$1.4 ^d	\$15.2	\$1.4
1987	15.6	°	36.1	1.4 ^d	16.8	1.9
1988	16.7	°	37.5	1.7 ^e	16.2	1.7
1989	16.6	\$.9 ^f	36.2	2.0 ^e	17.0	1.8
1990	17.7	1.5 ^f	37.5	2.5 ^e	18.8	1.8

Note: All figures are in 1982 constant dollars.

^aIncludes only travel charged against Salaries and Expenses appropriation; does not include travel done under Superfund and Leaking Underground Storage Tank appropriations, which are almost exclusively domestic.

^bIncludes all foreign travel; not limited to foreign travel done for environmental purposes.

^cEPA's financial management system does not allow amount spent on foreign travel to be identified.

^dEstimate based on travel authorizations processed through the Department of Energy's Office of International Affairs and Energy Emergencies.

^eForeign travel obligation data obtained from the Department of Energy's Office of Departmental Accounting and Financial Systems Development.

^fEstimate based on travel authorizations processed through EPA's Office of International Activities.

The Availability of Travel Funds at EPA, NOAA, and Energy

This appendix discusses the availability of travel funds at EPA, NOAA, and Energy.

Travel Fund Limitations Have Restricted Participation by EPA and NOAA

Although EPA and NOAA officials said that the funds available to support travel for meetings on international environmental issues have generally been adequate, funding limitations have occasionally limited their participation.

These funding limitations have resulted in some project delays or other inefficiencies in the negotiating process. Among other effects of the limitations, agency officials have reported (1) reductions in the range of expertise available at meetings, (2) a delay in implementing a joint research project, (3) inspections of fewer foreign laboratories than planned to ensure consistency and comparability of data among U.S. and foreign laboratories, and (4) less frequent opportunities for agency officials to exchange information and views. Agency officials did not, however, report any major adverse effects on overall agency programs or objectives from travel not undertaken because of these limitations.

According to EPA and NOAA officials, much of the travel associated with international environmental issues cannot be predicted far enough in advance to be considered during the budget process, which may require planning as much as 2 years in advance. Thus, travel funds required to attend meetings scheduled with little advance notice by international organizations to discuss emerging environmental issues and responses to major environmental emergencies, such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the Kuwaiti oil fires, are not included in the budget.

When such events do occur, agency officials must reassess priorities for the use of available travel funds. At EPA, for example, a November 1990 meeting between the U.S. and Mexican presidents resulted in an agreement that the environmental agencies of their respective countries would prepare a comprehensive plan to reinforce border cooperation for environmental protection. As a result, EPA's Office of International Activities had to reorder its priorities for the use of travel funds during fiscal year 1991 so that agency officials could attend the meetings necessary to carry out the terms of that agreement. The office incurred over \$22,000 in unanticipated travel costs, or about 9 percent of its annual travel budget.

According to EPA officials, as long as the agency can fund travel for important international activities, the limited availability of travel funds provides an incentive for using the funds efficiently and effectively and forces staff to be innovative in using the funds. According to the program director in the Office of International Activities, because travel funding decisions are based on the relative importance of competing requests and on the potential effects of not doing the travel, the funds generally are used for the trips that will result in the greatest benefits. According to the Director for Program Administration and Resources Management within the Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation, the limited availability of travel funds has increased innovation in the use of these funds. For example, the office has several projects on global climate change with various developing countries. Rather than fund trips to the individual countries to review and discuss these projects, staff have set up an annual conference in the United States and invited experts from these countries to relate their findings and participate in global policy discussions.

Other Factors Have Limited Agency Participation

Besides limitations on the availability of travel funds, other factors have restricted the agencies' participation in international environmental activities, including limitations on the availability of staff and, in the case of NOAA, a Department of Commerce travel policy that limits the number of staff who may attend a specific event.

Officials at all agencies said that the number of international environmental meetings had grown beyond the capacity of existing staff to attend. As a result, the Department of Energy, for example, has decided not to routinely attend all environmental meetings of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development but to determine attendance on a case-by-case basis, depending on the importance of the issues being discussed and the availability of staff to attend these meetings. The limited availability of staff was also a primary reason that Energy was not represented at the March 1991 preparation conference for the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development.

At the Department of Commerce, a departmental travel policy has restricted the number of staff attending certain international meetings. According to NOAA officials, a departmental policy requires that international travel requests for more than four employees to go to the same event or location be approved by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce. This policy has limited the number of delegates sent to some international conferences. For example, NOAA sent only 4 of 10 proposed

Appendix II
The Availability of Travel Funds at EPA,
NOAA, and Energy

delegates to the Fourth Pacific Congress on Marine Science and Technology held in Tokyo in July 1990, although NOAA was the international co-chair of this conference. A NOAA official did point out that, after rigorous agency and departmental review, NOAA had, in other cases—such as the Second World Climate Conference, which was headed by an Under Secretary of Commerce—sent more than four delegates.

The Department of Energy has a similar policy, but approval is required only when 10 or more departmental or contractor staff have requested travel to the same event. According to a special assistant to the Secretary of Energy for the environment, this restriction has not affected the agency's participation in international environmental meetings. EPA does not have any similar requirement, and according to the program director of its Office of International Activities, does not have any plans to institute such a requirement.

The Impact of Foreign Travel Funding Requirements on Programs at EPA, NOAA, and Energy

Because agency program managers must fund all of their activities, including associated travel expenses, from the total amounts they have been allocated, the amount spent on travel does reduce the amount available for programs. However, using funds for foreign travel to attend international environmental activities has generally not adversely affected agency programs, according to officials at EPA, NOAA, and Energy.

At EPA, the amount the agency can spend on travel, both foreign and domestic, is limited because the Congress annually establishes a travel ceiling for the agency as part of the budget and appropriations process. Once established, this travel ceiling is allocated by the budget office among the agency's headquarters and regional offices. These allocations are reviewed periodically during the fiscal year, at which times adjustments to individual allocations can be made. Our analysis of the agency's travel ceiling and obligations between fiscal years 1986 and 1990 shows that, during this period, the agency did not exceed its travel ceiling.

NOAA and Energy do not have travel ceilings. These agencies allocate funds to individual program managers for operating expenses, including both program and travel expenses. At NOAA, for example, although the funds allocated among operating groups include amounts budgeted for travel, managers are accountable only for not exceeding their total allotment. The NOAA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research said, for example, that the increased international attention to global climate change and negotiations associated with the Montreal Protocol had resulted in significant increases in his office's international travel. As a result, he said, other programmatic expenditure categories had been reduced but in no instance had major, planned program activities not been continued.

The Chief of NOAA's Resource Management Division also indicated that foreign travel funding does not have a major impact on agency programs. NOAA's total foreign travel expenditures are about 0.1 percent of the total budget and less than 2 percent of the discretionary funds, which are estimated at about 10 to 15 percent of the total budget.

At the Department of Energy, foreign travel expenditures account for an even smaller percentage of total agency funding. Both an assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary for Policy, Planning, and Analysis and a special assistant to the Secretary of Energy for the environment said that the funding of travel for international environmental activities had not adversely affected programs.

The Selection of Delegates to International Conferences

For meetings that require delegates to be designated officially by their governments, the State Department's Bureau for International Organization Affairs controls the size and composition of the delegations. For meetings that do not require delegates to be designated officially, individual agencies determine the size and composition of the delegations.

As a result of State Department efforts to reduce the size of delegations and the funding provided for U.S. participation in international conferences during the 1980s, international organizations have increasingly not required delegates to be designated officially. In an October 1990 report on U.S. participation in international conferences, the State Department's Inspector General found that although the State Department's control over the size and composition of delegations to international conferences had been lessened by this action, most conference delegations appeared to be composed of an appropriate number of skilled representatives. The report stated that two-thirds of all delegations consisted of four or fewer delegates.

Delegation Size and Composition Are Controlled Only When Accreditation Is Required

For conferences requiring accreditation, the State Department—specifically the Bureau for International Organization Affairs—controls the size of delegations and the selection of delegates. The objectives of international conference participation and the appropriate size and composition of U.S. delegations are described in the Department's Guidelines for U.S. Participation in International Conferences. According to the guidelines, the Department's primary objective is to form effective delegations of the minimum size necessary to achieve U.S. objectives at the lowest possible cost. The guidelines further state that no one may participate in conferences for which accreditation is required without prior approval by the Department. The bureau's Office of International Conferences is responsible for managing U.S. participation in multilateral conferences, including selecting, accrediting, and instructing U.S. delegations and providing representational support for U.S. delegates.

The delegate selection and approval process begins when the appropriate "lead" office or agency submits delegation proposals. The Office of International Conferences reviews the proposals and determines the number of delegates that will be accredited and the number that will be funded through the International Conferences and Contingencies (ICC) appropriation. According to the office director, as much discretion as possible is given to heads of the delegations to select whom they want to support them in this role. However, the selection of U.S. delegates for

international conferences is governed by the principle of essentiality. According to an official responsible for reviewing the lists of proposed delegates, this principle requires the Office of International Conferences to make sure that each proposed delegate will play a substantive role in the negotiations and that delegate roles and expertise will not be duplicated. In addition, the office examines security clearances and potential conflicts of interest. Once the office has determined the composition of the delegation, it provides the appropriate international organization with the names of the accredited U.S. delegates and identifies the delegates' roles.

According to an October 1990 State Department Inspector General's report, two actions taken by the State Department during the 1980s reduced its control over the selection of delegates to international conferences. First, in 1982, the President, concerned that delegations were too large and inefficient, instructed the Department to reduce the number of government delegates accredited annually by 30 percent. To implement this directive, the Office of International Conferences applied a formula that resulted in accrediting an average of 70 percent of the number of delegates accredited before 1980. As a result of this action, the ICC appropriation was reduced from \$11.3 million in 1980 to \$7.4 million in 1982.

Second, in 1986, budget reductions necessitated by the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-177, Dec. 12, 1985), commonly known as the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, resulted in a reduction of the ICC appropriation from \$8.7 million in 1985 to \$5.1 million in 1986. Again, the Office of International Conferences developed a formula to implement the reductions required by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act. In this instance, however, conferences were ranked in one of three categories on the basis of their perceived relative importance. Important national security conferences, for example, were given the highest priority and funded at 80 percent of 1986 levels. The next category, which includes meetings of the U.N. General Assembly, was funded at 65 percent of 1986 levels. The lowest category was allocated 56 percent of 1986 levels.

According to the Inspector General's report, as a result of these actions, the Office of International Conferences selects delegates to be accredited and funded almost entirely on the basis of formulas that do not take into account such factors as the number of delegates needed to cover conference activities or delegate qualifications. Furthermore, according to the Inspector General's report, although the number of accredited and

funded delegates to international conferences has been reduced significantly since 1980, the actual number of delegates to international meetings has not decreased. The report stated that rather than accept reduced U.S. participation, existing conferences deleted the requirement for delegate accreditation and new ones never required accreditation. It further stated that agencies began funding the costs of their delegations to international conferences. Finally, the report concluded that as a result of the actions taken to reduce the number of delegates and the funding for the delegates, the State Department had lost considerable control over managing and controlling U.S. participation in international conferences, which the authority to accredit and fund delegates through the ICC appropriation was intended to provide.

**International
Organizations and
Individual Agencies
Determine Attendance
at Meetings Not
Requiring
Accreditation**

For meetings not requiring accreditation, the sponsoring international organization and individual agencies determine the number and qualifications of representatives to be sent. If the meeting does not require accreditation, the sponsoring organization may directly invite the individuals or agencies it wants to participate. Individual agencies determine whether to attend the meeting as well as how many and which representatives to send. Their decision is based at least partially on the perceived importance of the meeting in relation to that of others for which limited travel funds are sought.

The State Department Inspector General's report stated that most of the conference delegations it had reviewed appeared to comprise an appropriate number of skilled delegates. It reported that about two-thirds of all delegations consisted of four or fewer delegates.

Major Contributors to This Report

Resources,
Community, and
Economic
Development
Division, Washington,
D.C.

Peter F. Guerrero, Associate Director
Charles M. Adams, Assistant Director
William H. Roach, Jr., Evaluator-in-Charge

Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

**U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20877**

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 275-6241.

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

First-Class Mail
Postage & Fees Paid
GAO
Permit No. G100