



February 2016

U.S. SECRET SERVICE

Data Analyses Could Better Inform the Domestic Field Office Structure

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

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

Why GAO Did This Study

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

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

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

What GAO Recommends

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

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

February 2016

U.S. SECRET SERVICE

Data Analyses Could Better Inform the Domestic Field Office Structure

What GAO Found

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Abbreviations

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FTE	full-time equivalent
INV	Office of Investigations
MNO	Management and Organization Division
TOPS	Travel Manager, Oracle, PRISM, Sunflower system
USA PATRIOT ACT	Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism

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February 10, 2016

The Honorable Scott Perry
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Jeff Duncan
House of Representatives

Commonly known for protecting the President, the U.S. Secret Service plays a leading role in investigating and preventing a variety of financial and electronic crimes. In fiscal year 2014 alone, the Secret Service reported over 5,000 arrests, nearly 7,000 cases closed, and over \$3 billion in financial loss prevention. To execute its dual investigative and protective missions, the Secret Service—a component agency of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) since 2003—operates a domestic field office structure consisting of 115 offices.¹ The structure is intended to provide the Secret Service with flexibility to carry out its two missions.

The primary role of the domestic offices is to support the Secret Service's investigative mission. Special agents conduct investigations to identify, locate, and apprehend criminal organizations and individuals targeting the nation's critical financial infrastructure and payment systems. Criminal investigation activities encompass financial and electronic crimes, including identity theft; counterfeiting; computer fraud; and computer-based attacks on the nation's financial, banking, and telecommunications infrastructure, among other areas. In addition to investigating financial and electronic crimes, special agents conduct protective intelligence—investigating threats against protected persons, including the President, and protected facilities, such as protectee residences. Special agents in

¹Homeland Security Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-296, title VIII, § 821, 116 Stat. 2135, 2224. Among other things, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 transferred the functions, personnel, assets, and obligations of the Secret Service from the Department of the Treasury to DHS, which occurred on March 1, 2003. The 115 offices do not include domiciles, which are typically a single special agent who works out of his or her residence.

domestic offices also often provide manpower, on a temporary basis, to fulfill the Secret Service's priority mission, protection, which includes ensuring the safety and security of the President, Vice President, their families, former presidents, major candidates for those offices, and foreign dignitaries, among others.² Specifically, domestic offices facilitate the advance work done prior to the visit of any Secret Service protectee and provide the staffing to secure each protected site. In addition to the protection of designated individuals, the Secret Service is responsible for certain security activities such as National Special Security Events, which include presidential inaugurations and national conventions.³

You requested that we review the Secret Service's domestic field office structure. Specifically, this report addresses the following questions:

1. What are the costs of the Secret Service's domestic field office structure and to what extent are the data reliable?
2. How do the domestic offices contribute to accomplishing the Secret Service's missions?
3. To what extent does the Secret Service use available data to ensure that its domestic field office structure meets its mission needs, and what data reliability challenges, if any, exist?

This report is a public version of a prior sensitive report that we provided to you.⁴ The Secret Service deemed some of the information in the prior report Law Enforcement Sensitive, which must be protected from public disclosure. Therefore, this report omits sensitive information regarding the performance rank of individual offices and investigative travel patterns, among other things. The information provided in this report is more limited in scope, as it excludes such sensitive information, but it addresses the same questions as the sensitive report and the overall methodology used for both reports is the same.

To determine the costs of the Secret Service's domestic field office structure, we obtained data from the Secret Service on the costs for each

²18 U.S.C. § 3056(a).

³18 U.S.C. § 3056(e).

⁴GAO, *U.S. Secret Service: Data Analyses Could Better Inform the Domestic Field Office Structure*, GAO-16-21SU (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 18, 2015).

domestic office by category (e.g., salaries and benefits and parking).⁵ We collected data for fiscal years 2009 through 2014—the 6 most recent fiscal years for which full-year data were available at the time of our review. To assess the reliability of the Secret Service’s cost data, we discussed with Secret Service officials how the data are entered and maintained in the Secret Service’s financial system of record. We also reviewed the data for any obvious errors and anomalies. We identified inaccurate salary and benefit data and determined that the cost data were sufficiently reliable in the aggregate for our purposes, but not at the individual office level. We compared the Secret Service’s practices for reviewing the reliability of its cost data against standards in *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, which state that control activities should be effective and efficient in accomplishing the agency’s objectives.⁶ As a result of the cost data limitation at the individual office level, we compared the costs of the Secret Service’s 42 domestic field office districts rather than individual offices. In addition, to account for the disparity in the size of domestic offices, we compared the costs of field office districts per full-time equivalent (FTE). We assessed the reliability of the Secret Service’s fiscal years 2009 through 2014 FTE data by interviewing Secret Service officials about how the data are captured from the agency’s time and attendance system. We determined that the FTE data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

To describe the ways in which domestic offices contribute to the Secret Service’s missions, we obtained and analyzed domestic office performance metric outcome data and agency-wide statistics for fiscal years 2009 through 2014. We assessed the reliability of both sets of data by interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data and by obtaining written responses from the agency regarding (1) the agency’s methods of data collection and quality control reviews, (2) practices and controls over data entry, and (3) any limitations. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes. Additionally, we compared the Secret Service’s performance metrics against agency and department strategic plans, statutes governing the Secret Service’s areas of

⁵Our review included all offices located in the United States and its territories, including Guam and Puerto Rico.

⁶Control activities are an integral part of an entity’s planning, implementing, reviewing, and accountability for stewardship of government resources and achieving effective results. GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 1, 1999).

responsibility, and measures developed under the Government Performance and Results Act.⁷ We found that the Secret Service's performance metrics align with the agency's investigative and protective missions. We also gathered information on Secret Service domestic offices' contributions to the missions through semistructured interviews with a nongeneralizable sample of 12 domestic offices from 6 districts. We selected these offices based on fiscal year 2014 data—the most recent data available—to represent a range of sizes, performance ranks relative to those of other offices, and mission focus. To gain an understanding of how domestic offices work with local and state law enforcement partners, we also conducted semistructured interviews with 15 law enforcement agencies. We selected at least one local and one state partner, such as a municipal or state law enforcement agency, from each district using lists provided by the domestic offices to represent partners that had long-term relationships with the Secret Service.

To determine the extent to which the Secret Service uses available data to ensure its domestic field office structure enables the agency to meet its mission needs, we interviewed Secret Service officials about how the agency has historically made decisions to open and close offices, and the methodology behind those decisions. We used *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* to assess the agency's efforts to ensure that its domestic field office structure meets its mission needs.⁸

Since we determined the Secret Service had not used its available data to analyze its field office structure, we analyzed Secret Service–provided cost, performance, and travel data to demonstrate how such analyses could position the Secret Service to better ensure that its domestic field office structure is responsive to changing conditions and that the agency is able to identify specific actions that need to be taken to meet mission needs. Specifically, we conducted two cost-performance analyses, including a regression analysis, to identify those Secret Service field office districts with relatively high costs and lower performance, and conversely low costs and higher performance. We analyzed, as part of the regression analysis, the costs of the Secret Service's 42 domestic field office districts rather than

⁷The Government Performance and Results Act sought to focus federal agencies on performance by requiring agencies to develop long-term and annual goals—contained in strategic and annual performance plans—and measure and report on progress toward those goals on an annual basis.

⁸[GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#).

individual offices as a result of the cost data limitation previously discussed. Finally, we analyzed domestic offices' fiscal years 2009 through 2014 travel data to identify the purposes of travel—protection, investigation, training, and support—as well as travel patterns that may warrant an adjustment of the domestic field office structure. On the basis of our discussions with Secret Service officials, we determined data on travel for the purposes of protection and support to be sufficiently reliable for our purposes. However, data on travel for the purposes of investigations and training were unreliable because some investigative travel was inaccurately recorded as training travel. As a result, we were unable to distinguish the number of trips taken by domestic field office personnel for the purpose of investigations and training; therefore, these categories are combined in our analyses by travel purpose. Additional details regarding our scope and methodology are provided in appendix I.

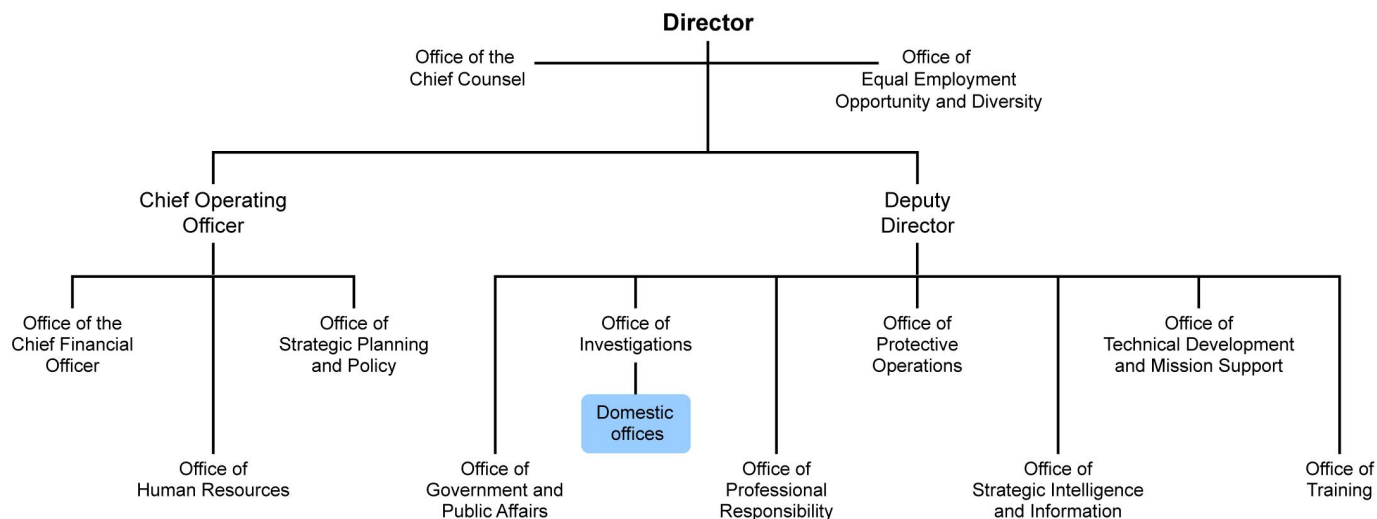
We conducted this performance audit from September 2014 through February 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions 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.

Background

Secret Service Organization

Secret Service headquarters is organized into a series of offices with different responsibilities. The Secret Service's Office of Investigations (INV) oversees the agency's criminal investigation mission and the field office structure. Although agents in the field support protective operations as needed, a separate cadre of agents is responsible for permanent protective details. Specifically, the Presidential Protective and Uniformed Divisions, within the Office of Protective Operations, carry out permanent protective details and assignments. The Presidential Protective Division is dedicated to the protection of the President. The Uniformed Division, subject to the supervision of the Secretary of Homeland Security, is to perform duties, as prescribed by the Director of the Secret Service, in connection with the protection of certain facilities, including the White House and the Treasury Building, among others. Figure 1 shows the Secret Service's organizational chart.

Figure 1: Secret Service Organizational Chart



Source: U.S. Secret Service. | GAO-16-288

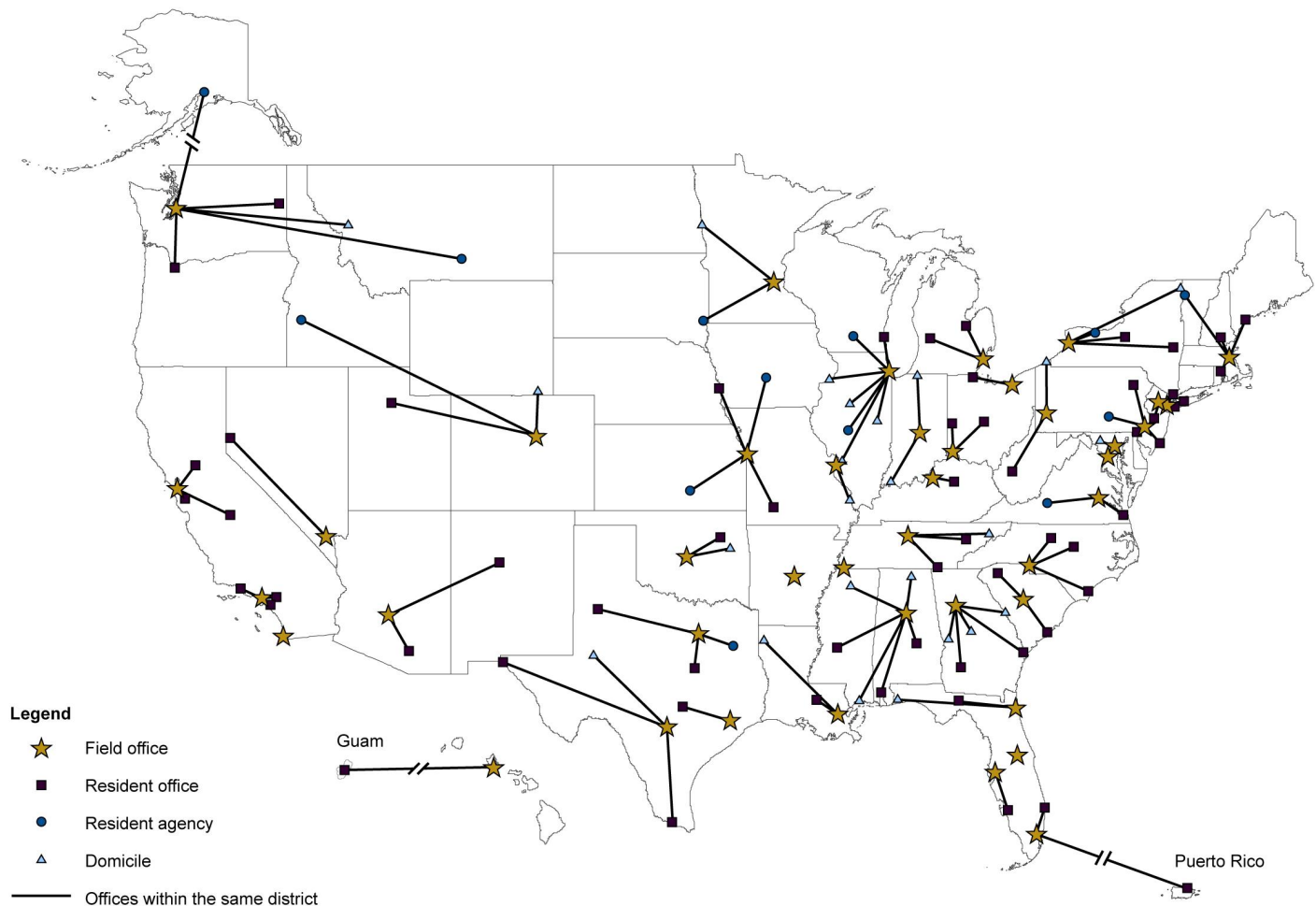
Domestic Office Types and Locations

The Secret Service's Office of Investigations operates four tiers of offices that make up districts.⁹ Specifically, there are 42 domestic districts, each led by a field office.¹⁰ The 42 districts are also composed of a total of 60 resident offices, 13 resident agencies, and 26 domiciles (see fig. 2).

⁹ According to Secret Service officials, the agency has proposed a new office structure that would change the tiers of offices described in this report. As of August 2015, the structure remained unchanged.

¹⁰ The Secret Service has 3 additional districts, for a total of 45, but those districts are composed entirely of foreign offices and are not within the scope of our review.

Figure 2: The Secret Service's Domestic Office Locations and Type



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service information; MapInfo (map). | GAO-16-288

The four categories of offices are defined as follows:

- Field office—The largest of all the offices, field offices are located in metropolitan areas, travel hubs, and populous areas where there is generally a high demand for protective and investigative services, according to Secret Service officials. These offices are to be led by a

special agent-in-charge who is also responsible for the management and staffing of contingent offices within the field office's district.¹¹

- Resident office—The next largest office after a field office in size. A resident agent-in-charge is to supervise the office, which is to be staffed by at least 3 special agents, in addition to an office manager, and typically an investigative assistant.
- Resident agency—Generally located in more remote areas where a field or resident office is not economically feasible. A resident agency is to be led by a senior special agent (resident agent), and staffed by additional special agents as dictated by the workload, and one or more administrative employees.
- Domicile—Typically a single special agent who works out of his or her residence. According to Secret Service officials, in some instances, the special agent works out of another agency's office space, such as that of a U.S. Attorney's Office or local police department.

Cost and Performance Data Collection

The Secret Service collects data on the cost and performance of its individual field offices, resident offices, and resident agencies.¹²

Cost. In general, each domestic office has its own organizational code, which allows the agency to identify costs for individual offices. Office costs include

- salaries and benefits—regular salaries and wages (including those paid for annual, sick, and compensatory leave), geographic differentials, overtime pay, holiday pay, cash incentive awards, and relocation expenses, among others;

¹¹In fiscal year 2014, a median-sized field office had 14 special agents and 4 administrative, professional, and technical staff (e.g., office manager).

¹²The Secret Service incorporates domiciles' cost and performance data with their respective parent field offices' data.

-
- infrastructure—rent for office and antenna space, parking, tenant improvements (office expansions or remodeling), Federal Protective Service fees, utilities, and repairs;¹³
 - travel—travel for protective details, investigative cases, training, and support (including conferences, office inspections, and recruitment); and
 - other—equipment (e.g., furniture and telephones), supplies, training and services, and rental and postage.

Secret Service headquarters centrally manages domestic office costs, except for those included in the “other” category, which are managed directly by the domestic offices. Specifically, Secret Service headquarters performs the budgeting for salary and benefits across the agency as well as infrastructure and travel costs. Domestic offices have their own small budgets from which to purchase items and services, such as postage and repairs to government vehicles.¹⁴

Performance. The Secret Service requires field offices, resident offices, and resident agencies to report on their operational activities. The Offices of Investigations and Strategic Planning and Policy use the reported data to award points to each office in accordance with 20 performance metrics. These metrics are related to the agency’s criminal investigation and protection missions (see app. II for the list of metrics and points). According to the Secret Service, the points assigned to each metric are based, in part, on the agency’s strategic plan, mission priorities, and the *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review*.¹⁵

¹³The Federal Protective Service, responsible for providing law enforcement and security services (e.g., responding to incidents) for all federal facilities held or leased by the General Services Administration, charges federal agencies fees for its service.

¹⁴We are not reviewing domestic offices’ use of Treasury Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture funds to support the acquisition of technology and equipment, among other things, for their task forces.

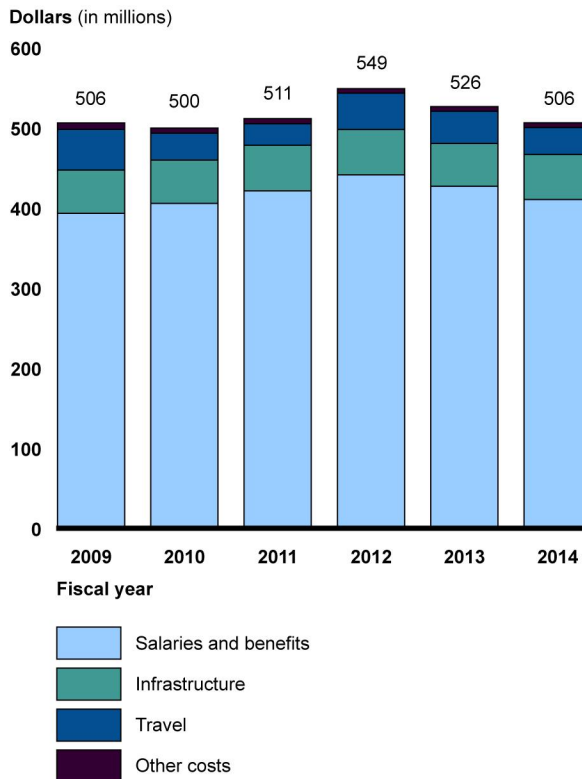
¹⁵The *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* lays out the vision, five mission areas, and goals and objectives for homeland security. DHS, *The 2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review* (Washington, D.C.: June 18, 2014).

The Domestic Field
Office Structure Costs
Over \$500 Million
Annually, but the
Secret Service Does
Not Accurately
Record Cost Data for
Some Offices

The Domestic Field Office
Structure Costs Over \$500
Million per Year

From fiscal years 2009 through 2014, annual domestic office costs ranged from a low of \$500 million in fiscal year 2010 to a high of \$549 million in fiscal year 2012 (see fig. 3). The cost of the domestic field office structure accounted for approximately 29 percent of the Secret Service's total budget, on average, across all 6 fiscal years.

Figure 3: Total Cost of the Secret Service Domestic Field Office Structure by Year and Cost Category, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



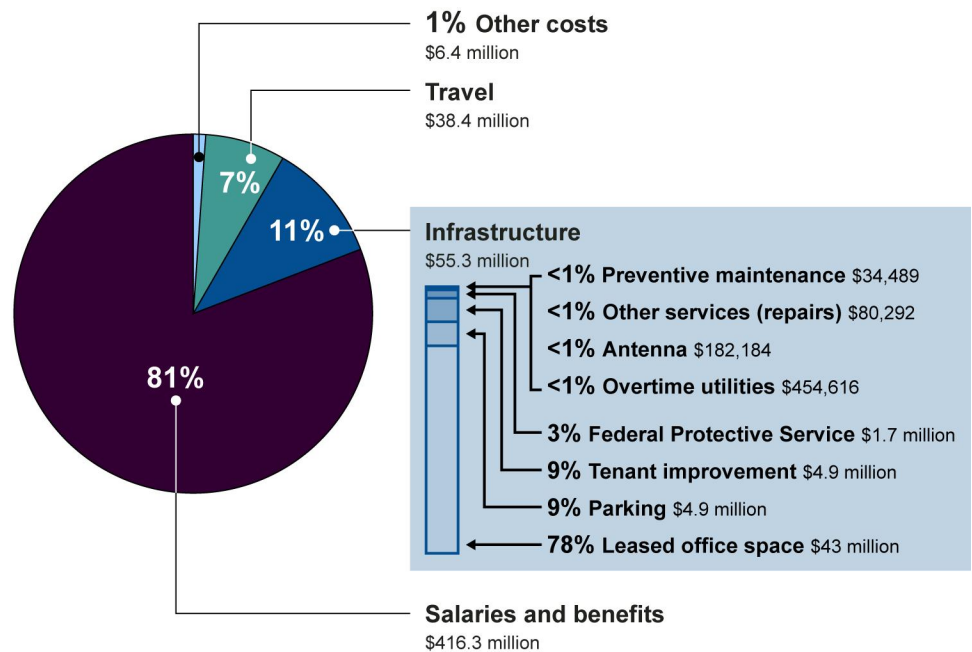
Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Note: Some agency costs incurred by domestic offices, including lodging for protective travel, vehicle purchase, working capital funds, information technology, telecommunications, and insurance claims, are centrally managed by Secret Service headquarters and not tracked in a manner in which they can be attributed to domestic offices. Accordingly, these noted costs are excluded from our analysis and the figure.

In fiscal year 2012, when domestic office costs peaked at \$549 million, costs increased by \$37.6 million when compared with costs for the prior year. Specifically, salaries and benefits increased by \$20.1 million and travel costs by \$18.7 million, primarily, according to Secret Service officials, because of protective duties associated with political campaigns and the general election in 2012. Over the 2 fiscal years following the election year, 2013 and 2014, salaries and benefits costs decreased by about \$30.9 million and travel costs decreased by about \$12.0 million. During those 2 fiscal years, the Secret Service's domestic office workforce was reduced by 351 FTEs. According to Secret Service officials, the agency had grown to a historically high number of personnel

in fiscal year 2011, with more than 7,000 total FTEs and could not sustain the size of its workforce because of increases in pay and rising health care costs. As a result, the agency had to limit hiring and allow attrition to gradually reduce the workforce.

Figure 4: Average Annual Cost of the Secret Service Domestic Field Office Structure by Cost Category, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

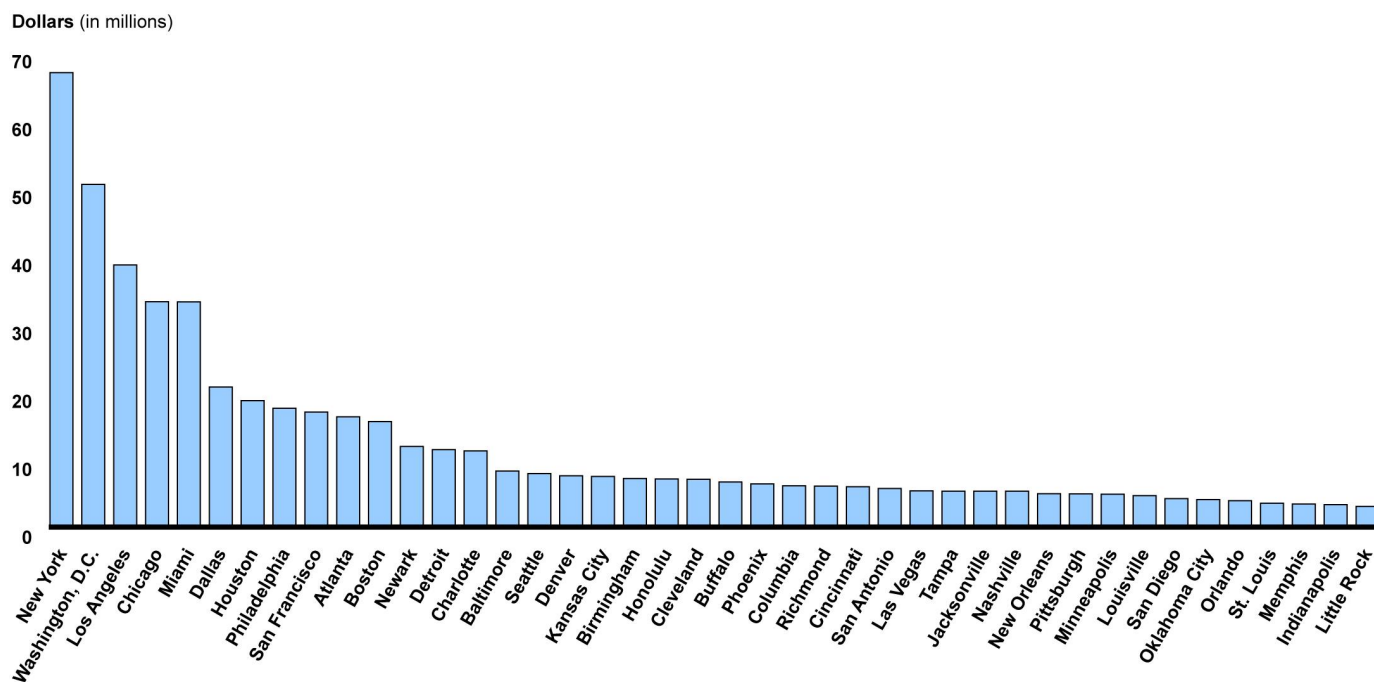


Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Note: Twenty-eight domestic offices have antennas to aid agency communications.

From fiscal years 2009 through 2014, salaries and benefits were the main cost driver, accounting for \$416.3 million (81 percent) of the average annual total cost of domestic offices (see fig. 4). Infrastructure, travel, and other costs accounted for the remaining \$100.1 million (19 percent) of the average annual total cost. Infrastructure costs accounted for \$55.3 million (11 percent) of the average annual total cost of domestic offices. The key driver of infrastructure costs was leased office space, accounting for \$43 million (78 percent). Travel costs accounted for \$38.4 million (7 percent) of the average annual total cost of domestic offices. Other costs made up \$6.4 million (1 percent) of the average annual total cost of domestic offices.

Figure 5: Average Total Secret Service Field Office District Costs, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Note: District costs include the cost of the field office and any subordinate resident offices and resident agencies within the district.

From fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the average annual cost of each of the Secret Service's 42 domestic field office districts ranged from \$3 million (Little Rock) to \$67 million (New York) (see fig. 5). The average annual cost per FTE in the 42 domestic field office districts ranged from \$167,550 to \$261,448.¹⁶ The variation among districts' FTE costs can be explained by costs associated with infrastructure and travel. For example, on average, from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the least expensive district per FTE spent almost \$8,000 per FTE on infrastructure compared with the most expensive district per FTE, which spent about \$28,000 per FTE given the greater cost of rent and parking. Similarly, the least expensive district per FTE spent about \$9,000 per FTE on travel

¹⁶The Secret Service determined the district costs per FTE for each individual district to be law enforcement sensitive. Therefore, we do not mention specific district names when providing costs per FTE.

compared with the most expensive district per FTE, which spent about \$56,000 per FTE, given the greater frequency of travel and cost of travel.

Of note, from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, 51 percent of the average annual total costs of all districts are attributable to 7 of the 42 districts—New York; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; Chicago; Miami; Dallas; and Houston. These 7 districts also represent 49 percent of the total FTEs in domestic districts. Table 1 shows the 7 most expensive field office districts by average annual total cost.

Table 1: Most Expensive Secret Service Field Office Districts, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Field office district name	Average total annual cost
New York	\$66,952,057
Washington, D.C.	\$50,433,126
Los Angeles	\$38,272,758
Chicago	\$33,177,573
Miami	\$32,760,857
Dallas	\$20,613,154
Houston	\$18,614,029
Total	\$260,823,554

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Secret Service Did Not Accurately Record Salaries and Benefits Cost Data for Some Offices

From fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the Secret Service did not accurately record salary and benefit data at the individual office level, but the data are reasonably reliable at the district level and in the aggregate. According to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, control activities are an integral part of an entity's planning, implementing, reviewing, and accountability for stewardship of government resources and achieving effective results.¹⁷ Although control activities can vary by agency, categories of control activities that are common to all agencies include accurate and timely recording of transactions and events, which helps to ensure that all transactions are completely and accurately recorded.

¹⁷[GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.](#)

On the basis of our analysis, salaries and benefits costs may not have been accurately recorded for 21 of 73 resident offices and agencies from fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Specifically,

- 13 resident offices and resident agencies likely had their salaries and benefits costs attributed to their “parent” field offices.¹⁸ For example, in fiscal year 2014, the Saginaw Resident Office’s reported salaries and benefits per FTE were \$15,588, far below the domestic office average of \$152,918. Conversely, Saginaw’s parent field office, Detroit, had higher than expected salaries and benefits at \$225,767 per FTE in the same year, and
- 8 resident offices and resident agencies had higher than expected salaries and benefits costs that may include the salaries and benefits of personnel in their parent field office. For example, the Tulsa Resident Office had salaries and benefits costs of about \$483,000 per FTE in fiscal year 2011. In the same year, the Oklahoma City Field Office, Tulsa’s parent office, had salaries and benefits costs of about \$45,000 per FTE.

According to Secret Service officials, salaries and benefits costs were incorrectly attributed to certain offices because the codes that determine the office where the costs were recorded were not always set up correctly in the agency’s time and attendance system. For example, the codes in the time cards may have been established using the organizational code for the parent field office, not realizing a subcode specific to the subordinate resident agency or resident office was needed. Officials added that they believe the organizational codes were not changed in the time and attendance system when some agents transferred offices. According to a senior Secret Service official, the budget division performs a biweekly review of part of the code structure for compliance, but not for the organizational code.

On the basis of our analysis, ineffective controls resulted in costs being inconsistently recorded at the office level from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, which yielded inaccurate cost data for certain offices. Specifically, the Secret Service lacks effective controls for recording time and attendance transactions for each office and has not employed an effective

¹⁸The Secret Service identified 5 of these 13 offices in the fiscal years 2009 through 2014 cost data it provided.

review process for ensuring time and attendance codes for cost data are correctly established and appropriately linked to resources. Without accurate data, the Secret Service is unable to reliably determine the cost of each of its domestic offices. Secret Service officials agreed that its cost data should be reliable at the individual office level. By implementing a review process to ensure time and attendance codes for cost data are correctly established and appropriately attributed to the correct office, the Secret Service could reliably determine the cost of each of its domestic offices to assist in assessing their cost-effectiveness.

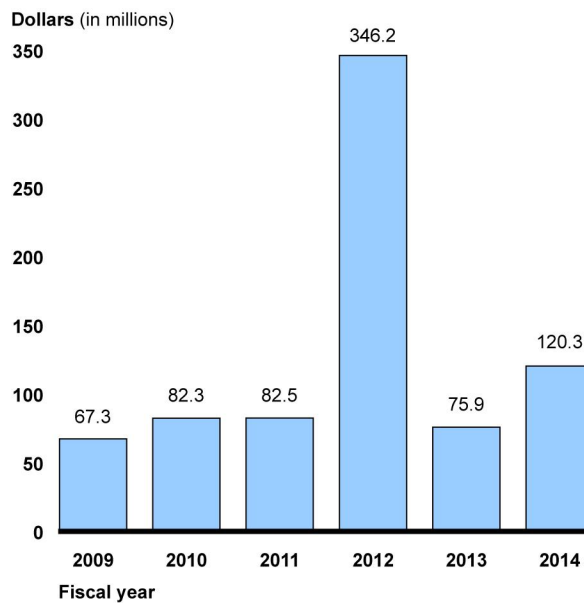
Domestic Offices Enable the Secret Service to Carry Out Its Investigative and Protective Missions, but Contributions Vary by Office

Secret Service's Domestic Offices Investigate Financial and Electronic Crimes and Play an Integral Role in Providing Protection and Recruiting Agents

Electronic and Financial Crime Investigations

The Secret Service's domestic offices predominately carry out the agency's investigative mission by investigating financial crimes, which include access device fraud; financial institution fraud; identity theft; mortgage fraud; bank fraud; and electronic crimes, including cyber fraud and computer-based attacks on financial, banking, telecommunications, and other critical infrastructure. On the basis of our analysis of Secret Service data, from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, domestic office investigations resulted in an estimated \$67.3 million to \$346.2 million per year in assets seized (see fig. 6) and \$18.3 million to \$28.3 million per year in counterfeit funds removed from circulation (see fig. 7).

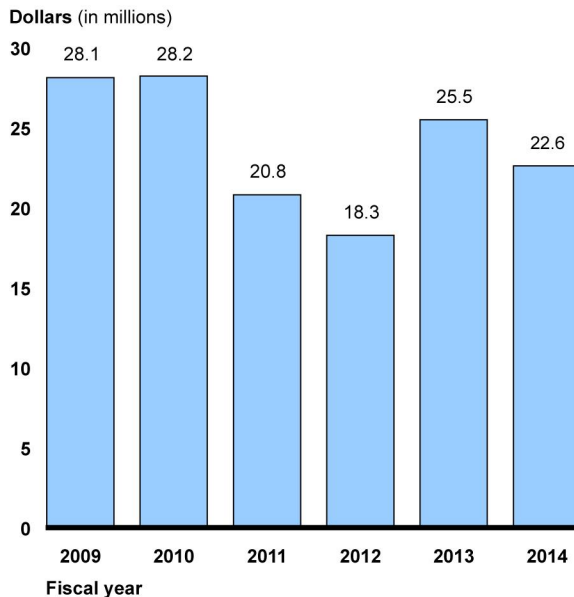
Figure 6: Estimated Dollar Value of Total Assets Seized by Secret Service Domestic Offices, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Note: The large increase in asset forfeiture in fiscal year 2012 was the result of a significant case led by the Charlotte Field Office, resulting in asset seizures estimated at nearly \$230 million.

Figure 7: Value of Counterfeit Funds Seized by Secret Service Domestic Offices, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

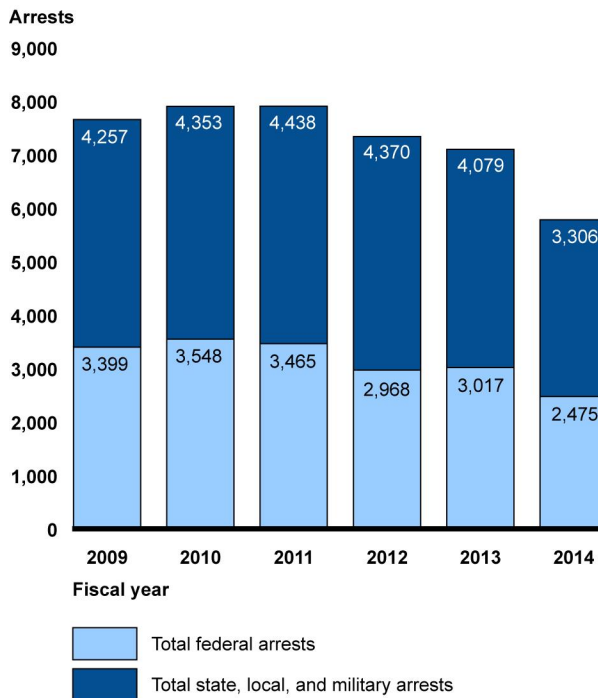


Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

During the same time period, domestic offices made an average of about 7,300 state, local, military, and federal arrests annually (see fig. 8).¹⁹ According to Secret Service officials, total arrests declined in fiscal year 2012 as a result of the need for increased protection related to the general election. Arrests further declined in fiscal years 2013 and 2014 because of decreases in the number of special agents in domestic offices. Secret Service officials reported that investigative accomplishments decrease commensurate with reductions in staff because it is necessary to scale back investigations while maintaining the same level of commitment to the protective mission.

¹⁹ According to Secret Service officials, federal arrests represent the number of subjects arrested under a warrant issued by a federal judge or accepted for prosecution by a U.S. Attorney's Office. State arrests represent the number of subjects arrested under a warrant issued by a state judge or accepted for prosecution by a state attorney's office.

Figure 8: Total Arrests Made by Secret Service Domestic Offices, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

To further facilitate financial and electronic crimes investigations, domestic field office districts host 81 financial or electronic crime task forces.²⁰ By leveraging locally fostered relationships, field offices create task forces composed of detailees from multiple federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, among others. These detailees contribute to Secret Service investigations by providing local knowledge as well as resources and manpower.

²⁰Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-56, § 105, 115 Stat. 272, 277. The USA PATRIOT ACT required the Director of the Secret Service to take appropriate actions to develop a national network of electronic crime task forces, based on the New York Electronic Crimes Task Force model, throughout the United States, for the purpose of preventing, detecting, and investigating various forms of electronic crimes, including potential terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure and financial payment systems.

Local knowledge. Officials at 8 of the 12 domestic offices we spoke with said that state and local law enforcement partners provide expertise and contacts because they are more familiar with local persons of interest and the culture. One Secret Service official added that when pursuing leads on financial crime, local police departments add value to the investigative process as they are often more aware of and connected to street-level contacts and confidential informants than Secret Service agents. In addition, officials from 1 domestic office we spoke with noted that making connections with task force members provides Secret Service agents with greater awareness of investigations being pursued by local law enforcement agencies, which can inform the Secret Service's investigative operations.

Resources and manpower. In the field executive summaries submitted by each domestic field office, we found that approximately one-third of domestic offices noted that state and local law enforcement partners provided assistance with investigations, including forensics.²¹ Secret Service agents in 2 domestic offices we spoke with use local police department forensics labs, while a third domestic office noted that state and local law enforcement partners provide manpower support to the Secret Service on a weekly basis. Officials in 5 of the 12 Secret Service offices and 3 of the 15 partner agencies we spoke with also stated that the existence of task forces and close investigative relationships allows partners to maintain momentum on investigations when Secret Service agents have to postpone them in order to perform protective duties. For instance, 1 office reported that task force members maintain investigations, including forensics investigations, and liaise with other partners when agents are occupied with protection duties.

To strengthen their partnerships with state and local law enforcement agencies, Secret Service officials reported that the agency also assists state and local law enforcement partners with investigations and provides training and resources. For example, 1 domestic office pointed out that it can assist state and local partners with electronic crime cases that reach outside their cities, counties, and states by calling on other domestic offices throughout the country. The Secret Service also provides training for state and local law enforcement partners. On the basis of our review

²¹Field executive summaries are narratives that accompany domestic offices' performance review reports to identify types of reported performance and provide examples of the office's accomplishments.

of field executive summaries for fiscal year 2014, over half of Secret Service domestic offices noted that they had provided training on financial crime investigations and forensics for state and local partners through local trainings or the National Computer Forensics Institute in Hoover, Alabama.²² Providing training opportunities for state and local law enforcement partners not only strengthens these relationships, but allows the partners to be more effective in assisting the Secret Service with its investigations, according to Secret Service officials. For instance, 1 domestic office reported that when its special agents trained through the Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program were transferred to other offices, it relied heavily on its local law enforcement partners, which had been trained by the Secret Service to conduct computer forensic examinations.²³

Protective Mission

Secret Service domestic offices contribute to protecting the President, Vice President, their families, foreign dignitaries, and other individuals in need of protection, and conduct protective intelligence investigations into threats against the President and other protectees. According to Secret Service officials, a key benefit of the agency's domestic field office structure is the placement of its offices across the country, positioning the Secret Service to support its protective mission. Domestic offices allow the Secret Service to maintain real-time knowledge of local activities that may affect security during a presidential or dignitary visit. Further, they provide a venue for developing and maintaining relationships with state and local law enforcement agencies that are vital for ensuring each protectee's safety.

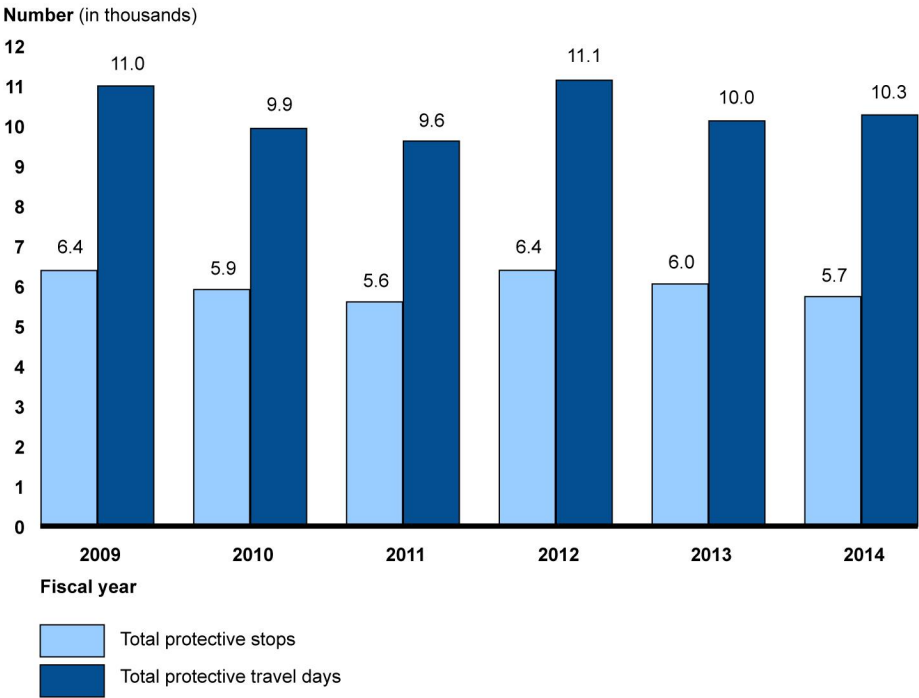
Domestic office officials told us that when special agents are required for a protective mission, the protective mission takes priority over ongoing investigations, with the exception of threat investigations. Domestic offices are responsible for coordinating the logistics and operations of protectee visits to their jurisdictions. Secret Service officials stated that for a visit from the President or Vice President, an advance team dedicated to that individual travels to the location prior to the visit to work with the

²²The National Computer Forensic Institute is a federally funded training center operated by the Secret Service's Criminal Investigative Division and the Alabama Office of Prosecution Services. The National Computer Forensic Institute instructs state and local law enforcement officials in digital evidence and cyber-crime investigations.

²³Through the Secret Service's Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program, special agents receive specialized training on how to conduct examinations of electronic evidence, including computers and telecommunications devices, among others.

local domestic office in planning the protective mission. In such cases, special agents assigned to the domestic office facilitate coordination between the advance team, special agents from other offices and state and local law enforcement partners. When an individual with no dedicated advance team visits a domestic office district, the office is responsible for all aspects of planning for protection. On the basis of our analysis, during fiscal years 2009 through 2014, individuals receiving protection from the Secret Service made between 5,597 and 6,386 visits per year, consisting of over 10,000 days (on average) in domestic office jurisdictions annually (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: Total Protective Travel Stops in Secret Service Domestic Office Districts, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Special agents assigned to domestic offices also travel to assist with protective missions in other locations. Each office is generally required to provide headquarters a list of 35 percent of its special agents available for travel to other locations for protective and investigative missions, but the majority of this travel is spent on protective missions.

Relationships built by domestic offices with state and local law enforcement partners through assistance on investigations and coordination on electronic crime cases facilitate not only the agency's investigative mission but also its protective mission, according to Secret Service officials. Domestic offices draw on these local relationships with state and local law enforcement agencies to ensure that protective visits are adequately supported with manpower and other necessary resources. Because of the scope of its protective mission, agents in each of the 12 domestic offices we interviewed emphasized that it would not be possible to protect visiting dignitaries without extensive assistance from state and local law enforcement partners. Secret Service officials stated that the domestic offices are critical to ensuring the success of protective assignments because of these relationships. Similarly, in interviews and field executive summaries for fiscal year 2014, Secret Service officials cited relationship development and maintenance as a significant benefit of their locations in the field. For example, officials pointed out that the Secret Service makes substantial use of manpower, equipment, and other resources provided by state and local partners for protective visits at no cost to the agency. One domestic office said it has used 150 to 200 local law enforcement officers (or 2,400 man-hours) for a single visit. Other offices reported that state and local law enforcement partners provide equipment, such as helicopters, vehicles, and communication equipment during dignitary visits.

State and local law enforcement officials provide resources to protective missions based, in part, on the relationships and training provided to their agencies by the Secret Service domestic offices. Of the 13 state and local partners we spoke with that provide assistance with protective missions, 12 said that they are willing to provide any resources needed by the Secret Service. Five of those partners noted that they provide assistance to the Secret Service because the agency contributes substantially to their investigations. They also said that they provide manpower and resources to protective missions on account of the assistance and training Secret Service provides them. For instance, 3 local law enforcement agencies noted that their officers receive on-the-job training when working with the Secret Service on protection. In addition, the Secret Service reported that over 1,000 state and local partners attended dignitary protection training at the Secret Service's James J. Rowley Training Center in Maryland from fiscal years 2009 through 2014. This investment in training by the Secret Service is mutually beneficial, according to Secret Service domestic office officials and their partners, as it allows the Secret Service to utilize state and local law enforcement as a

force multiplier while providing state and local law enforcement officials with training they can use in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Recruitment and Hiring

While contributing to the investigative and protective missions of the Secret Service, domestic offices also play a substantial role in the recruitment and hiring of new agents. In field executive summaries for fiscal year 2014, over half of the domestic offices reported attending job fairs, working closely with local colleges, or conducting interviews and examinations of applicants. They also noted that they recruit talented investigators from their state and local partners, allowing the Secret Service to gain experienced agents who are already familiar with law enforcement. Secret Service officials at 5 of the 12 domestic offices we spoke with cited recruitment as a significant activity for their agents. Officials at 1 domestic office noted that it administers the special agent entrance exam and other agent testing, as well as certification for panel interviews, security interviews, and background investigations necessary to complete the hiring process. Officials at another domestic office emphasized that the Secret Service's cadre of domestic offices across the United States helps its recruiting efforts, as it helps introduce qualified candidates from diverse locations and backgrounds to the Secret Service who might not have otherwise considered it an option.

Offices' Contributions to the Agency's Investigative and Protective Missions Vary

Since fiscal year 2009, the Secret Service has used performance metrics to assess its domestic offices. Over the years, the Secret Service has made changes to these metrics in order to better assess the contributions of individual offices to the agency's missions, according to Secret Service officials. For instance, in fiscal year 2013, the agency added a metric for the time special agents spend liaising with law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders. GAO analysis indicates that of the 20 metrics used in fiscal years 2013 and 2014, 6 relate solely to the agency's protective mission, 11 to the investigative mission, and the remaining 3 serve both the investigative and protective missions (see app. II).²⁴ For example, in regard to protection, domestic offices report on the number of protective intelligence cases in which they completed investigations of threats

²⁴The Secret Service's Office of Investigations has proposed modifications to the metrics for fiscal year 2015. Modifications would include new metrics for office contributions to recruitment and network intrusion investigations as well as changes in the weights of some metrics. These proposed modifications remain under review by Secret Service management as of August 2015.

against protected persons or facilities. In regard to both missions, domestic offices report the number of polygraph examinations conducted on persons of interest, among others. Our analysis comparing Secret Service performance metrics to agency and department strategic plans, statutes governing the Secret Service's areas of responsibility, and measures developed under the Government Performance and Results Act indicate that the Secret Service's performance metrics align with the agency's investigative and protective missions.²⁵ For example, metrics related to the protective mission, such as man-hours for protection, number of protective visits, and providing protection for National Special Security Events correspond to the Secret Service's mandate to protect individuals as laid out in statute, the *DHS Quadrennial Review*, and the agency's own strategic plan.

Since fiscal year 2013, the Secret Service has ranked each of its offices and field office districts utilizing a point system, in which points are assigned to each unit of each metric (see app. II).²⁶ In addition to ranking each office and district as a whole, the Secret Service also calculates a per agent rank, by dividing each office's and district's points by the number of nonsupervisory agents, to compensate for the variation in office and district size. An INV official told us that as of July 2015, the Secret Service had not determined how, if at all, it planned to use performance data to inform its field office structure. Officials also noted that offices' overall rankings also have to be reviewed in conjunction with their per agent rankings since larger offices tend to be ranked higher overall simply because they have more special agents to accomplish more work. For example, one office was ranked in the top 5 among all offices in both fiscal years 2013 and 2014. However, on a per agent basis, which is an indication of the efficiency of the office, this office was ranked 108 in fiscal

²⁵GAO, *Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships*, [GAO-11-646SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2011). According to this report, performance measurement should focus on whether a program has achieved its objectives, expressed as measurable performance standards.

²⁶The Secret Service determined the rank for each individual office and district to be law enforcement sensitive. Therefore, we omitted these ranks and do not mention specific office names when providing examples related to rank.

year 2013 and 123 in fiscal year 2014 out of a total of 137 offices.²⁷

Conversely, an office that was ranked as relatively low-performing, 120 out of 137 in fiscal year 2014, had a per agent rank of 16 out of 137, indicating that its low office-level ranking may be a function of being a smaller office, rather than poor performance.

The contribution of individual domestic field office districts to the Secret Service's investigative mission versus its protective mission varies widely. For example, in fiscal year 2014, investigative points ranged from 35 percent of a district's total points to nearly 98 percent. Points for protective activities contributed between 2 and 55 percent of districts' points. In fiscal year 2013, investigative points contributed between 34 and 97 percent, and protective points contributed between 1 and 65 percent. INV officials we spoke with noted that although districts can take action to increase their investigative contributions, they have little control over protection needs within their jurisdictions. As a result, in line with the primary role of domestic offices, INV has weighted metrics related to investigations more heavily than those related to the agency's protective mission. Therefore, offices with low levels of protective activity can still rank highly in the performance system. For instance, in fiscal years 2013 and 2014, one district drew over 97 percent of its points from metrics related to the investigative mission or both missions and had a district rank of 8 and 4 in those years (and agent rank of 3 and 2), respectively. Conversely, another district, which has a disproportionately large share of the agency's protective mission, drew 65 percent of its points in fiscal year 2013 and 55 percent in fiscal year 2014 from metrics related to protection.

²⁷International districts and offices are excluded from our analysis, but the Secret Service ranks these districts and offices with its domestic districts and offices so the total number ranked equals the number of domestic and international offices. Of the 45 Secret Service districts, 3 consist solely of international offices. Of the 137 Secret Service field offices contained within the districts, 22 are international offices. Further, the Secret Service does not evaluate and rank its domiciles separately from their parent field office.

The Secret Service Uses Data to Adjust Staffing, but Could Do More to Ensure That Its Domestic Field Office Structure Best Meets Mission Needs

The Secret Service Uses Performance Data to Adjust Staffing, but Does Not Fully Use Available Cost, Performance, and Travel Data to Analyze Its Field Office Structure

According to senior Office of Investigations officials, the Secret Service has an ongoing process for evaluating and adjusting staffing levels among its domestic offices. However, the Secret Service has not conducted an analysis of its domestic field office structure, including an assessment of office location and size. According to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, an agency's organizational structure provides management's framework for planning, directing, and controlling operations to achieve agency objectives.²⁸ In addition, an agency's internal controls should provide reasonable assurances that operations are effective and efficient, and that agencies should use information and data to ensure effective and efficient use of resources. Internal control guidance also suggests that management periodically evaluate the organizational structure and make changes as necessary in response to changing conditions.²⁹ The standards further note that all documentation and records should be properly managed and maintained.

INV officials reported that they do not know when the Secret Service last formally analyzed its domestic field office structure or if it has reviewed the structure because they were unable to find documentation indicating such a review had been conducted. In October 2014, the agency began to develop a plan to review the domestic field office structure in 2015, according to INV officials. However, according to INV officials, this planned review is now to be conducted as part of the Director's comprehensive bottom-to-top review of the entire agency. As of August

²⁸[GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#).

²⁹GAO, *Internal Control Management and Evaluation Tool*, [GAO-01-1008G](#) (Washington, D.C.: August 2001).

2015, INV officials reported that they have not received any guidance on how the review is to be conducted or what it will include with respect to the domestic field office structure.³⁰

Cost and performance data. INV officials reported that the Secret Service uses performance metric data to evaluate the quarterly performance of the domestic offices and as one of the factors in determining the office staffing levels. Staffing decisions, according to INV officials, often involve reviewing several variables related to the geopolitical climate as it pertains to the protective and investigative missions. Also taken into account are the experience level of agents in a particular office, protective stops within a particular district, whether a protectee has a private residence within a district, and an agent's specialty training certifications (i.e., polygraph and cyber forensics). Additionally, field office staffing level variables take into account individual agents' protective, investigative, and training requirements. However, officials from INV and the Management and Organization Division (MNO) stated that they do not use cost and performance metric data together to formally analyze—via a comparison of costs with performance metric outcomes—the location and size of its domestic offices. According to these same officials, the Secret Service does not compare domestic office costs with performance metric data because it is difficult to (1) assign benefits to protective activities in which the elimination of a threat—no outcome—is the desired outcome, and (2) capture costs and results of more complex investigations spanning different domestic offices over multiple years. However, the Secret Service can take steps to mitigate these challenges, as we did in our analysis comparing cost relative to performance of the field office districts. Specifically, to address the challenge of assigning benefits to protective activities, we used the Secret Service's protection related performance metrics of protective intelligence cases closed, protective travel stops, and protective man-hours to assign benefits to protective activities. To mitigate the issue of accurately capturing costs and results of more complex investigations, we

³⁰The Secret Service issued a Human Capital Plan in July 2015 containing an analysis of its workforce needs, including the need to add 1,250 agency-wide positions by the end of fiscal year 2019. However, the plan was not intended to serve as an analysis of the Secret Service's field office structure and does not address whether the domestic field office structure is appropriately positioned to meet mission needs, nor does the plan address how the Secret Service's domestic field office structure is to accommodate a potentially significant growth in personnel. U.S. Secret Service, *Human Capital Plan (FY 2015-FY 2019): Fiscal Year 2015 Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: July 23, 2015).

analyzed 4 years of data to account for investigations that span multiple years and do not produce results within a single fiscal year. To address the challenge of investigations that involve multiple domestic offices, we used the Secret Service's performance review reports for each office, which, according to MNO officials, provide each involved office points for its contributions, unlike the agency's official statistics which provide credit to a single office.

Our comparative analysis of the Secret Service's cost-to-performance data indicates that certain field office districts may be less cost-effective than others. Also, six performance metrics—(1) federal arrests, (2) protective travel stops, (3) protective intelligence investigations (cases closed), (4) amount of seized counterfeit currency, (5) value of actual financial crimes loss, and (6) critical systems protection advances—had a statistically significant relationship with field office district costs.³¹ We analyzed the cost and performance of the Secret Service's domestic field office districts to demonstrate the utility of such an analysis for evaluating the field office structure. Our analysis was conducted at the field office district level rather than individual office level because of limitations in the Secret Service's cost data, as previously discussed. This analysis compares the cost per special agent with the performance metric outcomes from fiscal years 2011 through 2014 to identify trends in cost and performance over these 4 years.³²

On the basis of our analysis of Secret Service-provided cost and performance data for fiscal years 2011 through 2014, we determined that the San Diego, Boston, Pittsburgh, Honolulu, and Houston Field Office Districts had the highest average cost per special agent relative to their

³¹All performance metrics were normalized by the number of special agents per district.

³²Our analysis was based on the cost and performance per nonsupervisory special agent because, according to Secret Service officials, they do not include all FTEs when calculating performance metric outcomes. Secret Service officials stated that they include nonsupervisory special agents alone when calculating performance metric outcomes because they are the only personnel authorized to perform the activities measured by the performance metrics, such as making federal arrests and providing protection for protectees visiting the district. Therefore, our analysis was limited to fiscal years 2011 through 2014, the years for which we had data on the number of nonsupervisory special agents in each district. We used the 13 of 20 performance metrics that were consistently measured from 2011 through 2014 in our comparison, with the exception of protective intelligence cases opened, which is strongly correlated to protective intelligence cases closed. See app. I for a detailed description of the model and app. II for a description of the performance metrics.

performance.³³ Comparatively, the Richmond, St. Louis, Baltimore, Little Rock, Birmingham, and Indianapolis Field Office Districts had the lowest average cost per special agent. In terms of cost relative to performance, the highest average cost district on a per agent basis (San Diego) cost 1.7 times more than the lowest average cost district (Richmond).³⁴ Overall, this indicates that compared with their peers, districts with higher average costs per agent could become more efficient at meeting the agency's needs given expended resources, and there may be opportunities to leverage practices from districts with lower average costs per agent.

According to INV and MNO officials, the Pittsburgh and San Diego Field Office Districts may not be as cost-effective as the other districts because of the limited number of cases prosecuted at the federal level. For instance, the U.S. Attorney's Office in the San Diego District, according to these same officials, prioritizes narcotics and immigration cases over financial and electronic crime cases. INV and MNO officials reported that the Richmond and Baltimore Field Office Districts likely had lower costs per special agent because in addition to the high number of background investigations they conduct, they also receive several performance points for the high volume of protection events and visits they handle in support of the Washington, D.C., District. By identifying the districts with higher and lower costs per special agent, the Secret Service could examine how to further maximize its domestic field office structure and ensure that its mission needs are not only effectively, but efficiently, met as well. For example, the Secret Service could use these insights on the efficiency of special agents in these districts gained from this type of an analysis to inform decisions it makes regarding the placement and size of its domestic offices. INV officials agreed that this type of an analysis may be useful in assessing its domestic field office structure.

We also compared the cost per special agent with the points accumulated per special agent for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 to determine the cost per agent point earned. This comparison measures how efficiently special agents are meeting the agency's mission needs. Since we were limited to 2 fiscal years, we could not identify any trends over multiple years.

³³This determination was made after controlling for 12 performance metric outcomes, year indicator variables, and subtracting the rent cost from the total district cost. See app. I for further detail.

³⁴See app. I, including table 2, for additional details.

However, this type of an analysis could be of greater use to the Secret Service, as it collects additional performance metric data in the future to identify any trends warranting an adjustment of the field office structure. For instance, the Secret Service could use this type of an analysis, upon collecting additional data, to identify the higher- and lower-cost districts by special agent point to inform decisions it makes regarding the placement and size of its domestic offices. See appendix III for a description of this analysis and findings.

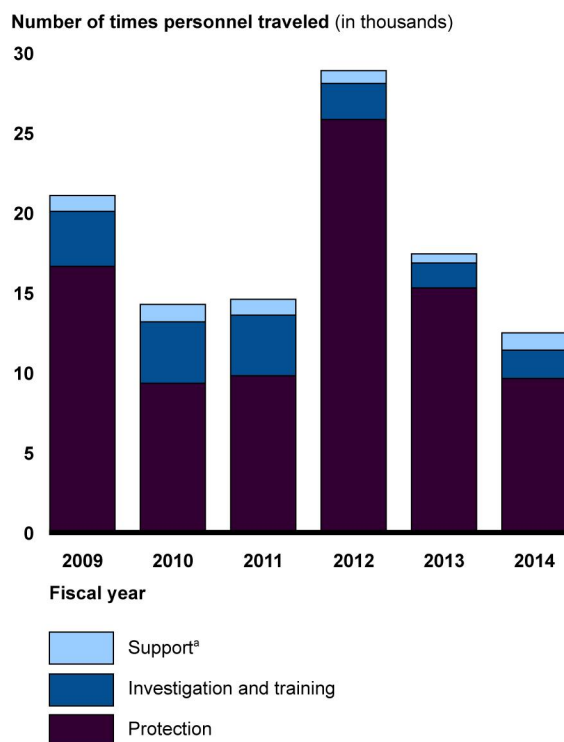
Travel data. According to INV officials, the Secret Service considers the number of protective travel stops in a district and agent hours traveling out of district when evaluating domestic office staffing levels. However, according to INV and MNO officials, the Secret Service does not use travel data on the geographic locations domestic personnel are traveling to or from to analyze the domestic field office structure. These officials noted that such an analysis is not conducted because the majority of domestic office travel is dependent on external factors, such as election campaigns; visiting foreign dignitaries; and natural disasters, among other factors, that are difficult to predict and beyond the agency's control. While these factors may be difficult to predict and outside of the Secret Service's direct control, further analysis of past and planned travel needs may assist the Secret Service in determining office placement and use of staff. For example, our analysis of frequent investigative travel patterns may indicate the need for the agency to establish a permanent Secret Service presence at certain non-Secret Service office locations. Given the dynamic nature of domestic office travel because of the protection demands cited by INV and MNO officials, it is important to analyze travel patterns to determine if the domestic field office structure is responsive to these changing conditions, as needed.

Our analysis of the Secret Service's travel data from fiscal years 2009 through 2014 shows that, overall, personnel in certain domestic offices traveled more often than personnel in others. However, on a per FTE basis, certain smaller offices may be contributing a greater share of their resources to travel. Our analysis further shows that domestic office personnel traveled to certain locations more frequently than to others to achieve the agency's protective and investigative missions. The travel is geographically dispersed, with concentrations in key geographic areas, and certain nonoffice locations have required frequent repeat travel from selected domestic offices to carry out the investigative mission.

From fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the number of trips taken by Secret Service personnel in domestic offices ranged from a low of 12,404 in

fiscal year 2014 to a high of 28,678 in fiscal year 2012 (see fig.10).³⁵ On average, from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, the Secret Service spent at least \$38 million on travel per year, with travel for protection accounting for the majority of travel taken by domestic field office personnel.

Figure 10: Purpose of Secret Service Domestic Office Personnel Travel, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

Notes: The figure reflects trip purposes, but not the number of unique trips, because a single trip can have multiple purposes. Of the approximately 108,112 trips taken from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, 577 had multiple purposes.

^aAccording to a Financial Management Division official, support encompasses conferences; office inspections; liaison with other federal, state, and local governments; recruitment; telephone and radio replacement programs; personnel computer program and other programs that affect the entire agency; and indirect support provided by the various offices.

³⁵A trip can have multiple purposes—protection, investigation, training, or support. As a result, these numbers reflect the number of trips by purpose, but not the number of unique trips taken. Specifically, 577 of the approximately 108,112 total unique trips taken for any purpose from fiscal years 2009 through 2014 have more than one purpose.

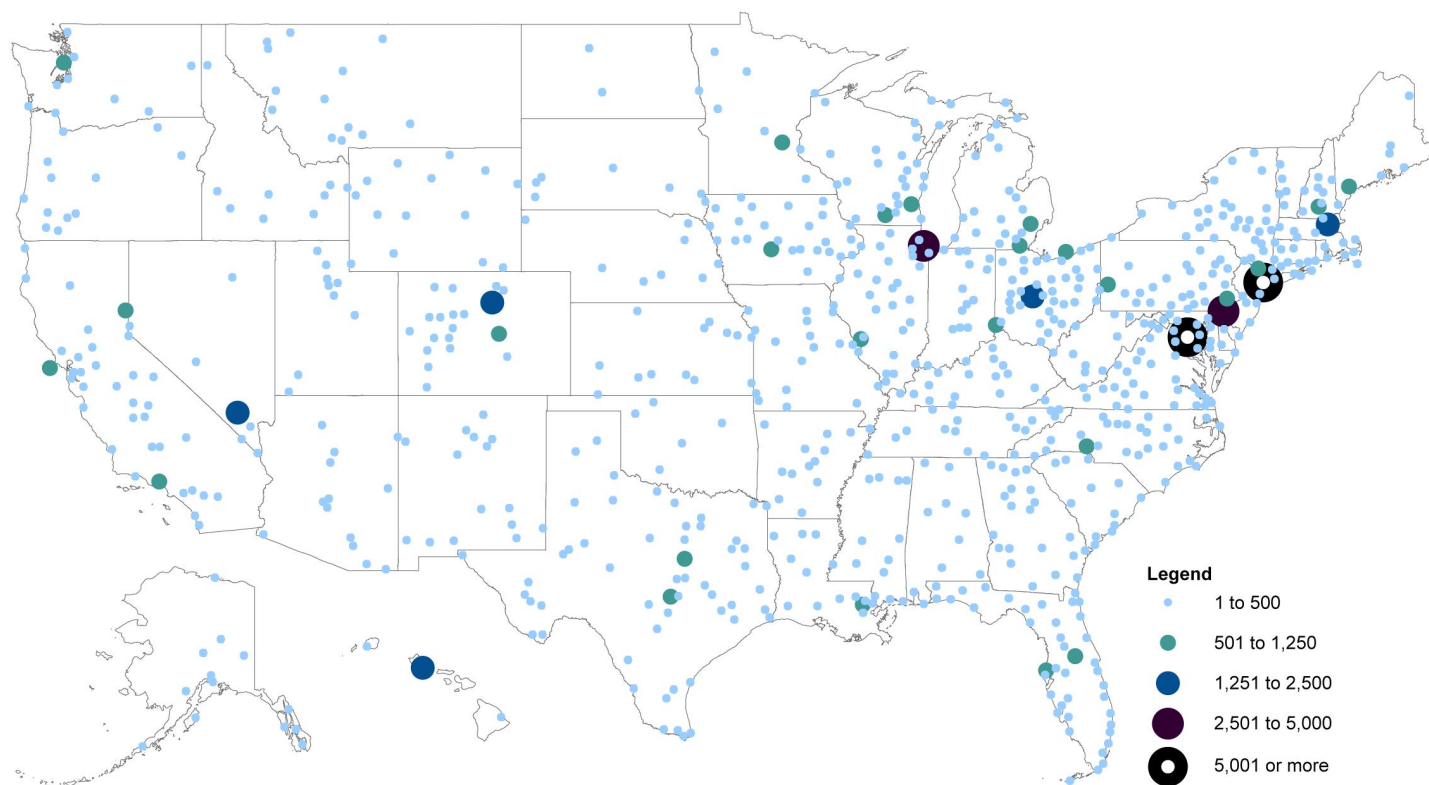
Overall, the domestic offices that had personnel who traveled the most often for any purpose from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, on the basis of our analysis, were the Los Angeles Field Office with 7,470 trips, followed by the New York, Miami, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., Field Offices. INV and MNO officials explained that these offices have the most special agents and as a result they are often used to provide agents for protection duties. However, further analysis of the trips taken per domestic office FTE shows that certain smaller offices may actually be contributing a greater share of their resources to travel. For example, we found that in fiscal year 2014, personnel in three smaller resident offices took 13 to 15 trips per FTE.³⁶ This was well above the average of 7 trips per FTE in fiscal year 2014 for all domestic offices. By analyzing the number of trips taken per FTE at each domestic office, the Secret Service could have greater insight into identifying how the agency is utilizing its domestic office FTEs and whether an adjustment in the field office structure is warranted to gain travel efficiencies. This type of analysis could be used by the Secret Service to inform decisions regarding domestic office staffing as well as the structure of the domestic offices.

Protective Travel

On the basis of our analysis of travel taken in support of the Secret Service's protective mission, we found that domestic office personnel visited 787 different U.S. cities during fiscal years 2009 through 2014. These personnel most often visited Washington, D.C. (11,087); New York (8,523); Wilmington, Delaware (3,051); Chicago (2,516); and Boston (1,653). According to INV and MNO officials, frequent travel to these destinations is largely because of the high number of protectee- and foreign dignitary-attended events, such as the United Nations General Assembly and other international summits, and current and past presidential residences. Figure 11 shows all of the U.S. locations visited by domestic office personnel for the purpose of carrying out protective duties and the frequency of those visits during fiscal years 2009 through 2014.

³⁶The Secret Service determined the trips taken per FTE for individual offices to be law enforcement sensitive. Therefore, we omit specific office names when providing examples related to the number of trips per FTE.

Figure 11: Locations the Secret Service Visited for Protection, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

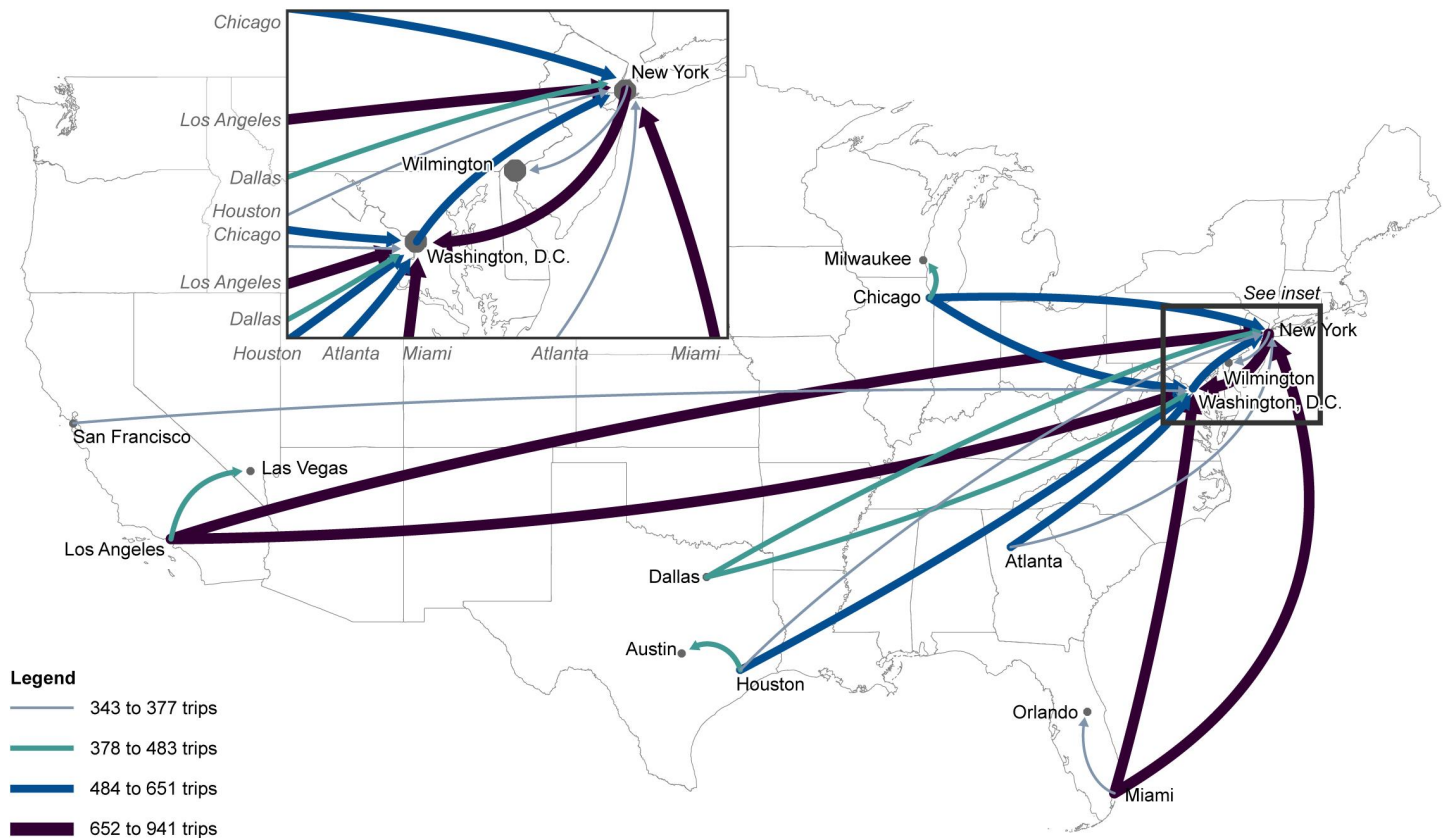


Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data; MapInfo (map). | GAO-16-288

As shown in figure 12, the domestic offices that had agents who traveled the most often for protection, on the basis of our analysis, were the Los Angeles Field Office, with the highest number of trips—6,328—from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, followed by the New York; Chicago; Miami; and Washington, D.C., Field Offices. Protective travel between these offices accounted for 8 percent of all total protective travel from fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Additionally, in the case of the Dallas, Houston, and Atlanta Field Offices, the frequent protection travel patterns reflect travel between protectee residences—former presidents Bush and Carter—and Washington, D.C. The Tyler Resident Agency in Texas had agents who traveled the least often for protection, with 50 trips taken from fiscal years 2009 through 2014, followed by the Anchorage, Alaska; Akron, Ohio;

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Roanoke, Virginia; and Wilmington, Delaware offices.³⁷

Figure 12: Secret Service's 20 Most Frequent Travel Patterns for Protection, Fiscal Years 2009-2014



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data; MapInfo (map). | GAO-16-288

Note: We counted multileg trips as distinct trips in our analysis. For example, a trip with three stops is treated as three distinct trips.

Investigative Travel

On the basis of our analysis of investigative travel, we found that personnel from four domestic offices each made 73 or more trips to the same geographic locations where there is no Secret Service office, from

³⁷The Secret Service closed the Akron Resident Office in 2012.

fiscal years 2009 through 2014.³⁸ For example, one field office had personnel who traveled a total of 241 times to the same geographic location, with a minimum of 29 trips in fiscal year 2013 and a maximum of 54 in fiscal year 2010. INV officials explained that frequent travel for these four domestic offices was the result of joint investigations, favorable prosecution rates for Secret Service cases, and providing assistance with major fraud investigations. Given the staffing levels at these offices—an average of 20 or fewer FTEs from fiscal years 2009 through 2014—and frequent travel, this could indicate a need to adjust staffing levels at these offices or establish a permanent agency presence at non-Secret Service office locations.

Conducting an analysis of its domestic field office structure, inclusive of cost and performance, and other meaningful indicators of resource need, such as travel data, could provide the Secret Service with greater assurance that its domestic field office structure is responsive to changing conditions, as needed, and that the agency is able to identify specific actions that need to be taken to meet mission needs. Specifically, a comparative analysis using cost and performance and travel data could, among other things, help the Secret Service identify inefficiencies in its domestic field office structure, including the cost relative to the performance of particular offices and the location and size of offices, and serve as a basis for allocating personnel. Additionally, this type of analysis could also assist the agency with determining and justifying its budgetary needs based on projected domestic field office activities. By analyzing the travel patterns of its domestic field office personnel—purpose and locations traveled to—the agency could determine if there are geographic areas that are under- or over-represented in terms of field office coverage, thus warranting a potential adjustment of the domestic field office structure. Further, maintaining a record of such analysis and results could help ensure that key decisions and management directives resulting from this analysis are carried out, and serve as a baseline for future analyses.

³⁸The Secret Service determined the locations visited for investigations to be law enforcement sensitive. Therefore, we omit the names of geographic locations when discussing investigative travel patterns.

Secret Service Has Not Accurately Recorded the Purpose of Travel for Investigations and Training on a Consistent Basis

Inconsistencies in how Secret Service personnel in domestic offices recorded the purpose of investigative- and training-related travel from fiscal years 2009 through 2014 adversely affected the reliability of the agency's travel data. According to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, control activities are an integral part of an entity's planning, implementing, reviewing, and accountability for stewardship of government resources and achieving effective results.³⁹ Although control activities can vary by agency, categories of control activities that are common to all agencies include the accurate and timely recording of transactions and events.

According to INV officials, the purpose of travel to some of the geographic locations most often visited—identified as 100 or more visits—for the purpose of investigations from fiscal years 2009 through 2014 was likely for training rather than investigations, as recorded. For example, according to INV officials, locations such as Las Vegas, Nevada; San Antonio, Texas; and Orlando, Florida, are popular destinations for law enforcement conferences on investigations. Secret Service agents often attend the conferences as presenters or students. Similarly, the Secret Service named Birmingham, Alabama; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Brunswick, Georgia; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as examples of locations likely traveled to for training rather than investigations. These are, according to Secret Service officials, locations that host training and academic facilities. Accordingly, domestic office personnel travel to these locations to instruct or attend training courses. According to Secret Service officials, however, since investigations may have been the topic of the conferences or training courses, domestic office personnel likely recorded these trips as investigative instead of training on their travel request forms.

INV and Financial Management Division officials reported that they require all personnel to identify the purpose of travel on their travel request forms using the purpose of travel provided to them through e-mail. Further, each travel request must be reviewed and authorized by the traveler's first-line supervisor. However, individuals may make mistakes when identifying the purpose of travel in their travel request forms, and supervisors may not be aware of the purpose the traveling employee was directed to use. Accordingly, the appropriate travel purpose may not be recorded.

³⁹[GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#).

As a result of ineffective controls to ensure that the purpose of investigative- and training-related travel is accurately recorded, the Secret Service is unable to reliably determine the cost and number of trips taken for the purpose of investigations—one of its two core missions. This further limits the Secret Service’s ability to fully analyze investigative travel data to determine if its domestic offices are optimally located to meet its mission needs. By ensuring that supervisors are aware of the travel purpose that is to be used and reviewing the travel request forms to confirm that the correct travel purpose is recorded, the Secret Service will be able to enhance its travel request and approval process. As a result, the Secret Service will be able to reliably report on travel cost information and be better positioned to inform the budgetary needs of its domestic offices and assess related travel data that may inform its efforts to determine if its domestic offices are optimally located to meet its mission needs.

Conclusions

The Secret Service plays a vital role by protecting our nation’s leaders, including the President; ensuring the safety of foreign dignitaries visiting the United States; and investigating crimes against our financial, banking, and telecommunications infrastructure, among other important activities. The Secret Service’s domestic field offices are essential to the agency accomplishing its investigative mission and successfully executing its protective mission. Given the significant contributions the domestic field offices make in carrying out the agency’s missions, it is critical that the offices be strategically positioned, in terms of both geography and resources. The Secret Service’s institutional knowledge and subject-matter expertise are important for informing the domestic field office structure. Having the right data and using them to inform the structure is also important, as having the right data can provide agency leadership an important basis for ensuring the Secret Service is best positioned to carry out its mission given available resources. However, making effective data-driven decisions is dependent on using reliable data. The Secret Service does not currently have reliable salary and benefits cost data for each of its offices. Correcting this will provide the Secret Service with an accurate representation of how much each office costs, and serve as a reliable basis for understanding resources allocated to each domestic field office.

Further, conducting and documenting an analysis of its field office structure could provide the Secret Service with greater assurance that its domestic offices are best positioned to achieve its mission needs. The Secret Service has made a significant investment in developing metrics

for understanding contributions made by its domestic field offices, and has collected related performance data since at least 2009. Conducting a comparative cost and performance analysis of its domestic field offices can enhance the information agency leadership has available for decision making. Importantly, the analysis can provide the Secret Service with greater insight on the cost relative to performance of each office, help identify inefficiencies and best practices, and provide valuable data for informing future budget requests. In addition, by analyzing other meaningful indicators of resource need, such as travel data, the Secret Service could leverage additional information to ensure that its domestic offices are optimally located to meet its mission needs, and better understand the extent to which agents in each office travel and for what purpose. Finally, taking steps to ensure that the purpose of travel by domestic office personnel is accurately recorded will allow the agency to reliably determine the costs associated with the investigative mission, which is critical to assessing how resources are used in the domestic field offices to meet the agency's mission needs.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help ensure that the Secret Service accurately records salaries and benefits cost data for its domestic offices, we recommend that the Director of the Secret Service implement a review process to ensure time and attendance codes used for recording cost data at each domestic office are correctly established and appropriately attributed to the correct office.

To better ensure that the Secret Service's domestic field office structure is enabling the Secret Service to best meet its mission needs, we recommend that the Director of the Secret Service

- conduct an analysis using cost and performance data and consider using other data, such as travel data, to assess and inform its domestic field office structure, and
- maintain a record of the analyses performed and the results.

To help ensure that the Secret Service has reliable information on the number and cost of trips for its domestic field office personnel for investigative and training purposes, we recommend that the Director of the Secret Service enhance its travel request and approval process to ensure that the trip purpose is accurately documented, effectively reviewed and approved, and accurately recorded.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of the sensitive version of this report to DHS for its review and comment. DHS provided technical comments, which have been incorporated into this report, as appropriate. DHS also provided written comments, which are reprinted in appendix IV. In its comments, DHS concurred with the report's four recommendations and described actions it has under way or planned to address the recommendations by September 30, 2016.

DHS concurred with the first recommendation, to implement a review process for domestic office time and attendance codes and stated that the Secret Service's Office of Human Resources will generate monthly reports to ensure employee office codes in the time and attendance system align with the office codes in the payroll system of record. If implemented as planned, this action should help address the intent of the recommendation and ensure cost data are attributed to the correct office.

DHS concurred with the second recommendation, that it conduct an analysis using cost and performance data and consider using other data, such as travel data, to assess and inform its domestic field office structure. DHS stated that the Secret Service will develop a methodology for incorporating cost data into its analysis of the field office structure. However, DHS cited challenges to comparing cost to performance data, including investigations that span multiple jurisdictions and fiscal years. We acknowledged those challenges in this report and identified ways in which we were able to mitigate them when conducting our own cost-to-performance analyses of the Secret Service's domestic field office structure. We believe that an analysis that combines both the Secret Service's cost and performance data will help ensure that the domestic field office structure is enabling the Secret Service to best meet its mission needs. As illustrated in our report, such an analysis can help the Secret Service identify the offices yielding the greatest performance given cost over a period of time. Such information can serve as a basis for encouraging effective mission-driven practices at lower performing locations. The data can also serve to uncover locations where fewer resources should be allocated given the lack of mission-driven activities and high cost for achieving them. In other words, performing a cost-to-performance analysis, as we recommend, yields the Secret Service a "bang for the buck" assessment to inform the agency's allocation of scarce resources.

It is further important to note that our second recommendation focuses on the Secret Service comparing cost-to-performance data, among other data, as part of an analysis. We agree that other factors, such as travel

patterns and associated resource use, as well as location-specific crime data, among other things, should be assessed as part of the analysis. However, undertaking a cost-to-performance analysis to inform the assessment of the field office structure would help efforts to ensure resources are best positioned to meet the Secret Service's mission needs.

DHS concurred with the third recommendation to record the results of the analyses performed and stated that the Secret Service's Office of Strategic Planning and Policy will maintain any analyses completed.

Finally, DHS concurred with the fourth recommendation, to enhance its travel request and approval process and stated that the Secret Service's Risk Management and Assurance Branch will conduct validity tests to ensure trip purposes are accurately documented, effectively reviewed and approved, and accurately recorded. Additionally, any deficiencies found during testing of the travel request and approval process will be corrected. If implemented as planned, these actions should help address the intent of the recommendation and ensure each trip purpose is accurately documented.

As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies to the Secretary of Homeland Security, Director of the Secret Service, and other interested parties. In addition, the report will be 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) 512-9627 or maurerd@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 are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Maurer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Diana C. Maurer
Director
Homeland Security and Justice

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

This report addresses the U.S. Secret Service's domestic field office structure. Specifically, our objectives were to examine the following questions:

1. What are the costs of the Secret Service's domestic field office structure and to what extent are the data reliable?
2. How do the domestic offices contribute to accomplishing the Secret Service's missions?
3. To what extent does the Secret Service use available data to ensure that its domestic field office structure meets its mission needs, and what data reliability challenges, if any, exist?

To determine the costs of the Secret Service's domestic field office structure, we obtained data from the Secret Service on the costs for each domestic field office, resident office, and resident agency by cost category.¹ We collected data for fiscal years 2009 through 2014—the 6 most recent fiscal years for which full-year data were available at the time of our review. We analyzed the total cost of the field office structure in addition to costs associated with four categories we identified—salaries and benefits, infrastructure, travel, and other (e.g., supplies)—among all the categories provided by the Secret Service. The Secret Service was unable to provide some cost data—lodging for protective travel, vehicle purchases, working capital funds, information technology, telecommunications, and insurance claims—for the field office structure because these costs are not tracked in a manner in which they can be attributed to domestic offices.

To assess the reliability of the Secret Service's cost data, we discussed with Financial Management Division and Management and Organization Division officials, among others, how the data are entered and maintained in the Secret Service's official financial system of record—Travel Manager, Oracle, PRISM, Sunflower system (referred to as TOPS)—which is used to disburse salaries, operating expenses, and travel costs. We also reviewed the data for any obvious errors and anomalies and identified inaccurate salary and benefit data because these costs were attributed to the wrong office within the same district of the office where

¹Our review included all offices located in the United States and its territories, including Guam and Puerto Rico. The costs associated with a domicile—a single special agent who typically works out of his or her home—is included in the cost of the domicile's parent field office.

the costs were incurred (e.g., the salary and benefit costs of a resident office were assigned to its parent field office). As a result, we determined that the cost data were sufficiently reliable in the aggregate, but not at the individual office level. We compared the Secret Service's practices for reviewing the reliability of its cost data against standards in *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, which state that control activities should be effective and efficient in accomplishing the agency's objectives and help ensure that all transactions are completely and accurately recorded.²

To address the cost data limitation at the individual office level, we compared the costs of the Secret Service's 42 domestic field office districts rather than individual offices. In addition, to account for the disparity in the size of domestic offices, we also compared the costs of field office districts per full-time equivalent (FTE), which is inclusive of all personnel. We assessed the reliability of the Secret Service's fiscal year 2009 through 2014 FTE data by interviewing Secret Service officials in the Office of Investigations and Workplace Planning Division about how the data are captured from the agency's time and attendance system. According to a Secret Service official, the data do not reflect a small number of FTEs from two divisions that place personnel in domestic offices, such as polygraph examiners. Although the Secret Service does not know how many of these staff are in each of the domestic offices, we determined the FTE data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes because the costs associated with these personnel were not included in the Secret Service's cost data.

To address our second question and describe the ways in which domestic offices contribute to the Secret Service's missions, we obtained and analyzed data provided by the agency on domestic office contributions from fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Specifically, the Secret Service provided two sets of data on domestic office contributions: (1) performance review reports used to assess performance during fiscal years 2009 through 2014, and (2) official statistics for the same years. We compared the Secret Service's performance metrics with agency and department strategic plans, statutes governing the Secret Service's areas of responsibility, and measures developed under the Government

²GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 1, 1999).

Performance and Results Act.³ We found that the Secret Service's performance metrics align with the agency's investigative and protective missions. The performance review reports were formulated to give all contributing domestic offices credit for accomplishments (e.g., if several offices contributed to an arrest, each would get credit), whereas the official statistics published in the Secret Service's annual report count each accomplishment for only the main contributing office, to correctly reflect the agency's accomplishments. We utilized the performance review reports in cases where we were assessing accomplishments on a domestic office or field office district basis, and used the official statistics in instances where we assessed the domestic offices' contributions as a whole. We assessed the reliability of both sets of data by interviewing agency officials knowledgeable about the data and by obtaining written responses from the agency regarding (1) the agency's methods of data collection and quality control reviews, (2) practices and controls over data entry, and (3) any limitations of the data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes. We also systematically reviewed the Secret Service's Field Executive Summaries for fiscal year 2014—narratives that accompany each domestic office's performance review reports to identify types of reported performance and provide examples of the office's accomplishments.

Finally, we gathered information on Secret Service domestic offices' contributions to the missions through semistructured interviews with a nongeneralizable sample of 12 domestic offices in 6 districts led by field offices in Atlanta, Georgia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Los Angeles, California; Memphis, Tennessee; Miami, Florida; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. We selected the offices based on fiscal year 2014 data—the most recent data available—to represent a range of sizes, performance ranks, and mission focus. To gain an understanding of how domestic offices work with local and state law enforcement partners, we also conducted semistructured interviews with at least one local and one state partner for each selected district. The 15 law enforcement agencies were selected from lists provided by the domestic offices to represent partners that had long-term relationships with the Secret Service.

³The Government Performance and Results Act sought to focus federal agencies on performance by requiring agencies to develop long-term and annual goals—contained in strategic and annual performance plans—and measure and report on progress toward those goals on an annual basis.

To address the third question, regarding the extent to which the Secret Service uses available data to ensure its domestic field office structure enables the agency to meet its mission needs, we interviewed officials from the Office of Investigations, Management and Organization Division, and Administration Operations Division about how the agency has historically made decisions to open and close offices, and the methodology behind those decisions. We used *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* to assess the agency's efforts to ensure that its domestic field office structure meets its mission needs.⁴ Since we determined the Secret Service had not used its available data to analyze its field office structure, we analyzed Secret Service–provided cost, performance, and travel data to demonstrate how such analyses could position the Secret Service to better ensure that its domestic field office structure is responsive to changing conditions and that the agency is able to identify specific actions that need to be taken to meet mission needs.

To identify those districts with high costs and lower performance and conversely low costs and higher performance, we conducted a regression analysis of the 42 field office districts comparing cost with performance. Specifically, we used variable district costs—total costs, except for rent—and all of the performance metrics that the Secret Service used during fiscal years 2011 through 2014, with the exception of the protective intelligence cases closed metric. This metric was excluded because of how closely correlated it is with the protective intelligence cases opened metric. Since the cost data at the individual field office level were not reliable as previously discussed, we used variable costs at the district level and then determined the average district cost per (1) special agent from fiscal year 2011 through 2014, and (2) special agent point for fiscal years 2013 and 2014. All performance metrics and cost variables were normalized by the number of special agents per district to account for the varying size of domestic offices within a district. We were not able to make cost-of-living adjustments across localities, since the analyses had to be performed at the district level and a Secret Service district can cover more than one locality depending on the number and location of offices. For example, the Atlanta District includes the Atlanta Field Office, and Albany and Savannah Resident Offices. We evaluated cost and performance data for the fiscal year 2011 through 2014 time frame because the data on the number of special agents assigned to each field

⁴[GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#).

office district were available for this time frame. We also analyzed the average district cost per special agent point for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 because 2013 was the first year the Secret Service used the point system.

Model. The following equation presents the model to be estimated where:

= The total variable cost per agent, excluding rent, incurred by district i in year t .

= an intercept.

= a group of 12 performance metrics per agent identified and used by Secret Service. The metrics consist of travel days, physical protection hours, federal arrests, state arrests, cases closed, counterfeit seized value, asset forfeiture, potential loss, actual loss, in-custody responses closed, critical systems protections, and protective intelligence cases closed by district i in year t .

= indicator variables for fiscal years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

= district indicator variables for each of the 41 districts where Richmond is used as the reference district.

= error term assumed to be possibly heteroskedastic and auto-correlated.

Results. Table 2 shows the regression results, which we used to determine the average cost per special agent and special agent point. The district ranking is estimated from this table by adding the average cost differential from each district to Richmond's average cost per agent.

Table 2: Regression Results for Secret Service District Cost with Performance Comparison

Variable	Coefficient	Standard errors
travel days	3203.6	(2.71)***
physical protection hours	21.59	(1.10)
federal arrests	6967.1	(1.88)*
state arrests	-205.8	(-0.11)
protective intelligence cases closed	3073.7	(4.43)***
counterfeit seized value	-0.0808	(-2.67)***
asset forfeiture	0.00167	(0.71)
potential loss	-0.0000402	(-0.21)
actual loss	-0.00167	(-1.73)*
in-custody responses closed	7657.9	(0.84)
critical systems protections	-44806.4	(-1.70)*
state and federal cases closed	5988.6	(0.84)
control variable for year 2011	-79034.1	(-11.69)***
control variable for year 2012	-54909.5	(-6.48)***
control variable for year 2013	-26724.1	(-5.06)***
Atlanta	96870.8	(2.57)**
Baltimore	40343.5	(1.55)
Birmingham	89711.0	(3.20)***
Boston	186205.8	(4.50)***
Buffalo	161979.2	(4.32)***
Charlotte	132469.0	(3.54)***
Chicago	141112.3	(3.31)***
Cincinnati	144688.3	(3.47)***
Cleveland	145590.6	(4.13)***
Columbia	127297.6	(4.73)***
Dallas	102996.3	(2.30)**
Denver	140378.1	(3.46)***
Detroit	147456.7	(4.22)***
Honolulu	166683.4	(3.07)***
Houston	165193.7	(4.01)***
Indianapolis	89806.8	(1.69)*
Jacksonville	90295.4	(2.68)***
Kansas City	115119.7	(3.23)***
Las Vegas	150280.6	(4.00)***
Little Rock	84661.1	(1.66)*

Variable	Coefficient	Standard errors
Los Angeles	138539.2	(3.31)***
Louisville	143117.5	(3.33)***
Memphis	114545.2	(4.18)***
Miami	137787.0	(3.48)***
Minneapolis	128764.8	(3.64)***
Nashville	134656.9	(3.48)***
New Orleans	145149.3	(3.10)***
New York	129980.0	(2.54)**
Newark	119586.3	(2.76)***
Oklahoma City	157212.9	(4.43)***
Orlando	137153.2	(4.63)***
Philadelphia	120082.6	(2.98)***
Phoenix	137130.3	(3.41)***
Pittsburgh	175814.6	(6.39)***
San Antonio	112026.5	(2.92)***
San Diego	191526.5	(4.99)***
San Francisco	161540.8	(3.85)***
Seattle	132720.0	(3.19)***
Tampa	164663.9	(5.09)***
Washington	94311.0	(2.39)**
St. Louis	28850.6	(0.73)
Intercept	93517.8	(2.14)**
Observations	168	
R-squared within	0.7175	
t statistics in parentheses		
* p<0.10	** p<0.05	*** p<0.01

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data. | GAO-16-288

We analyzed the Secret Service’s travel data to identify travel patterns that may warrant an adjustment of the domestic field office structure. Specifically, we analyzed travel voucher data from the Secret Service’s Travel Manager System for all domestic office personnel—special agents and administrative personnel—who traveled from fiscal years 2009 through 2014. Using a Geographic Information System to synthesize and analyze all trips taken by originating domestic office and destination by fiscal year, we determined the following:

- the purpose of all domestic office travel—protective, investigative and training, and support travel;

- all locations that domestic office personnel traveled to for the purpose of protection, both those with a Secret Service office and those without a Secret Service office; and
- domestic offices that took the greatest number of total trips and trips per FTE.

We used the travel data to assess whether the domestic offices are optimally located given the Secret Service's travel patterns to geographic locations with or without a Secret Service office. To determine the reliability of these data, we discussed with Financial Management Division and Management and Organization Division officials, among others, how the data are entered and maintained in the Secret Service's Travel Manager System, which is used to disburse travel costs. We also reviewed the data for any obvious errors and anomalies. We determined that the travel data were unreliable for determining the number of trips taken for the purposes of investigations and training because some investigative travel was, according to Office of Investigations officials, inaccurately recorded as training travel. As a result, we combined investigative and training travel in our analyses by purpose. Travel data for the purposes of protection and support were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

To understand how manpower resources are diverted from domestic offices, we treated multileg trips as separate visits in our analyses. For instance, a multileg trip from Chicago to Los Angeles with a stop in Spokane was treated as two separate visits to capture the actual location of the traveling employee: Chicago to Los Angeles and Chicago to Spokane. We did not evaluate travel costs since the voucher data do not contain lodging costs, according to Management and Organization Division officials, for protection-related travel, which is the majority of domestic office personnel travel. Additionally, we did not analyze the length of trips and distance traveled because the primary purpose of this analysis was to identify the locations domestic office personnel were traveling to and for what purpose.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2014 through February 2016 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.

Appendix II: Metrics Used by the Secret Service to Assess Performance of Domestic Offices

Table 3 lists the metrics, by mission, used by the Secret Service in fiscal years 2009 through 2014 to assess the performance of its domestic offices. Over the years, the Secret Service has made changes to these metrics in order to best assess the contributions of individual offices to the agency's missions, according to Secret Service officials. We developed the descriptions below using Secret Service guidance and interviews with Secret Service officials. Table 4 shows the number of points that can be earned by an office for each performance metric in fiscal years 2013 and 2014—the years in which points were awarded.

Table 3: Performance Data Collected by the Secret Service, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

	Performance metric	Description	2009-2010	2011-2012	2013-2014
Investigative mission	Amount of Potential Financial Crimes Loss	Financial loss that could have occurred if stolen financial information (e.g., credit card) had been used (\$500 per account number stolen)	X	X	X
	Amount of Actual Financial Crimes Loss	Actual dollar value of victims' loss from financial crimes	X	X	X
	Number of Federal Arrests	Number of subjects arrested under a warrant issued by a federal judge or accepted for prosecution by a U.S. Attorney's Office	X	X	X
	Number of State and Federal Cases Closed	Number of completed investigations	X	X	X
	Number of State and Federal Cases Opened	Number of investigations initiated	X	X	X
	Amount of Counterfeit Currency Seized	Monetary value of counterfeit funds seized	X	X	X
	Number of State Arrests	Number of subjects arrested under a warrant issued by a state judge or accepted for prosecution by a state attorney's office	X	X	X
	Value of Asset Forfeiture Seizures	Appraised value of items seized or the value of seized cash or cash equivalents (e.g., gift cards)	n/a	X	X
	U.S. Attorney's Office Annual Meeting Memorandum	Compliance with the Secret Service requirement that the domestic offices meet at least once a year with associated U.S. Attorney's Offices and maintain records of each meeting	n/a	n/a	X
	Investigative Support (Mobile Wireless and Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program Hours)	Mobile Wireless: anytime a Secret Service team deploys mobile wireless technology Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program Hours: time spent on examinations of electronic evidence, including computers and telecommunications devices, among others	n/a	n/a	X
	Electronic or Financial Crimes Task Force in District	Office hosts one or more task forces that facilitate coordination with state and local law enforcement partners	n/a	n/a	X

Appendix II: Metrics Used by the Secret Service to Assess Performance of Domestic Offices

	Performance metric	Description	2009-2010	2011-2012	2013-2014
Protective mission	Protective Man-hours	Agent hours devoted to providing protection to individuals under 18 U.S.C. § 3056 or presidential executive order, as well as special agent hours for protection of facilities such as the White House	X	X	X
	Number of Protective Stops ^a	Number of days a protected person visited in each office's district	X	X	X
	Protective Intelligence Investigations	Number of cases in which the Secret Service completed an investigation into potential threats to protected persons	X	X	X
	Permanent Protectees in District	Number of individuals requiring ongoing protection, such as former presidents or their family members, residing in the district	n/a	n/a	X
	National Special Security Event in District	Number of events classified as National Special Security Events or facilities, such as national party conventions	n/a	n/a	X
	Critical Systems Protection Advances	Number of systematic audits and technical assessments of the critical infrastructure and utilities that support protective visits, events, and venues	n/a	n/a	X
Investigative and protective missions	Number of In-Custody Responses Closed	Number of instances in which Secret Service domestic offices respond to requests from law enforcement partners to determine whether individuals in custody are persons of interest in Secret Service investigations	n/a	X	X
	Polygraph Examinations	Polygraph examinations for prospective agents' background investigations and security clearances and persons of interest, and at the request of state and local law enforcement partners	n/a	n/a	X
	Liaison Man-hours	Number of hours spent liaising with state and local law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, private companies, and other partners	n/a	n/a	X

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service information. | GAO-16-288

Notes: An "X" indicates that the performance metric was tracked in that year.

^aPrior to fiscal year 2013, this metric was calculated as the number of times a protected person visited in each office's location. For these years, stops were defined as the entirety of a visit to one geographic location.

Appendix II: Metrics Used by the Secret Service to Assess Performance of Domestic Offices

Table 4: Secret Service Performance Metric Point Values, Fiscal Years 2013-2014

	Metric	Point value
Investigative mission	Amount of Potential Financial Crimes Loss	1 per \$50,000 in loss
	Number of Federal Arrests	20 for core violations/16 for other violations
	Number of State and Federal Cases Closed	3 for criminal cases/1 for non-criminal and other
	Number of State and Federal Cases Opened	3 for criminal cases/1 for non-criminal and other
	Value of Asset Forfeiture Seizures	1 per \$2,500 seized
	Number of State Arrests	5 for core violations/4 for other violations
	Investigative Support (Mobile Wireless and Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program) Hours	2 points per mobile wireless mission plus 0.2 point per hour for Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program
	Amount of Counterfeit Currency Seized	1 per \$2,000 seized
	Amount of Actual Financial Crimes Loss	1 per \$100,000 loss
	Electronic/Financial Crimes Task Force in District	100 per task force
	U.S. Attorney's Office Annual Meeting Memorandum	100 points for compliance
Protective mission	Protective Man-hours	1 per 40 hours
	Number of Protective Stops	Varies by protectee and number of nights
	Protective Intelligence Investigations	5 per case closed
	Permanent Protectees in District	Varies by resources required for protectee
	National Special Security Event in District	Varies by size and nature of event (e.g., 25 points for presidential Inauguration)
	Critical Systems Protection Advances	5 per advance
Investigative and protective mission	Liaison Man-hours	1 per hour
	Number of In-Custody Responses Closed	3 for criminal cases/1 for non-criminal and other
	Polygraph Examinations	3 per exam closed

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service data and information. | GAO-16-288

Appendix III: Average Cost per Special Agent Point Analysis

In alignment with agency mission priorities, the Secret Service established a point system and weighted metrics for use in fiscal years 2013 and 2014 when assessing the performance of both its domestic offices and special agents. Using the resulting data, we conducted a comparative analysis of the associated performance data against cost. Specifically, we analyzed the variable cost per special agent point earned for all 20 performance metrics defined by the Secret Service.¹ Since we were limited to 2 fiscal years of performance data, we could not yet identify any trends that may warrant an adjustment to the field office structure. However, the Secret Service could build on this type of analysis as it collects additional performance metric data in the coming years.

On the basis of our analysis, as shown in figure 13, we determined that the New Orleans Field Office District was among the 5 districts with the highest variable cost per special agent point in both fiscal years 2014 and 2013. We also found when comparing this analysis with the average cost per special agent analysis that the Pittsburgh and San Diego Field Office Districts had some of the highest costs per special agent and special agent point. Specifically, we determined that

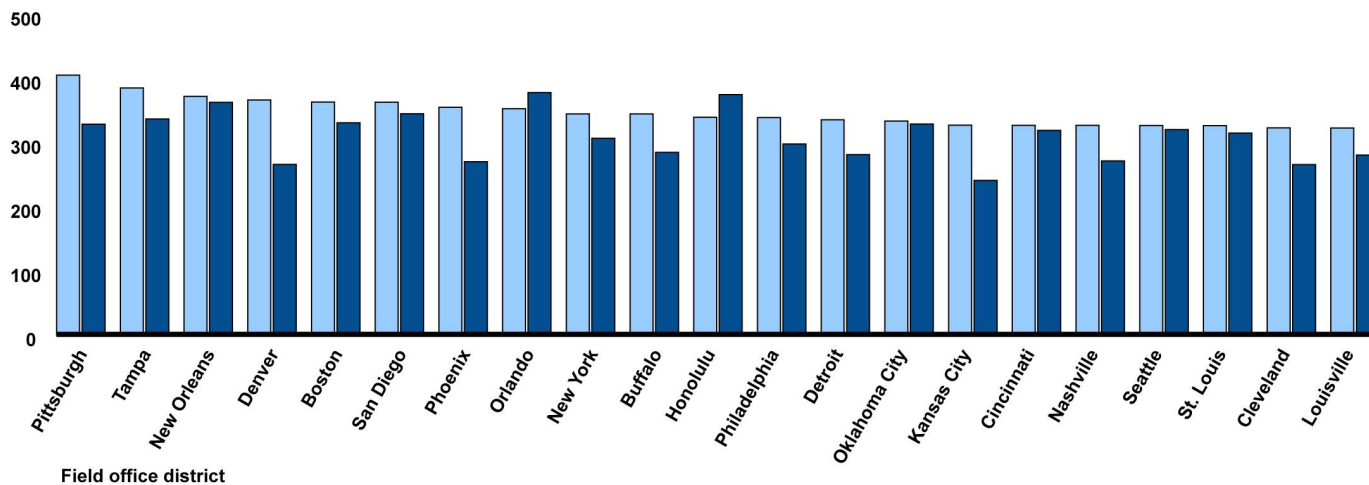
- the Pittsburgh, Tampa, New Orleans, Denver, and Boston Field Office Districts had the highest cost per special agent point in fiscal year 2014. The Orlando, Honolulu, New Orleans, Memphis, and San Diego Field Office Districts had the highest cost per special agent point in fiscal year 2013.
- The Washington, D.C.; Atlanta; Dallas; Richmond; and Little Rock Field Office Districts had the lowest cost per special agent point in fiscal year 2014. The Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Kansas City, Miami, and Dallas Field Office Districts had the lowest cost per special agent point in fiscal year 2013.

Office of Investigations (INV) and Management and Organization Division (MNO) officials explained that the variance in cost per special agent points from fiscal years 2013 to 2014 could be the result of lengthier, multiyear investigations that do not show results (e.g., cases closed or value of asset forfeiture) until the following year or years.

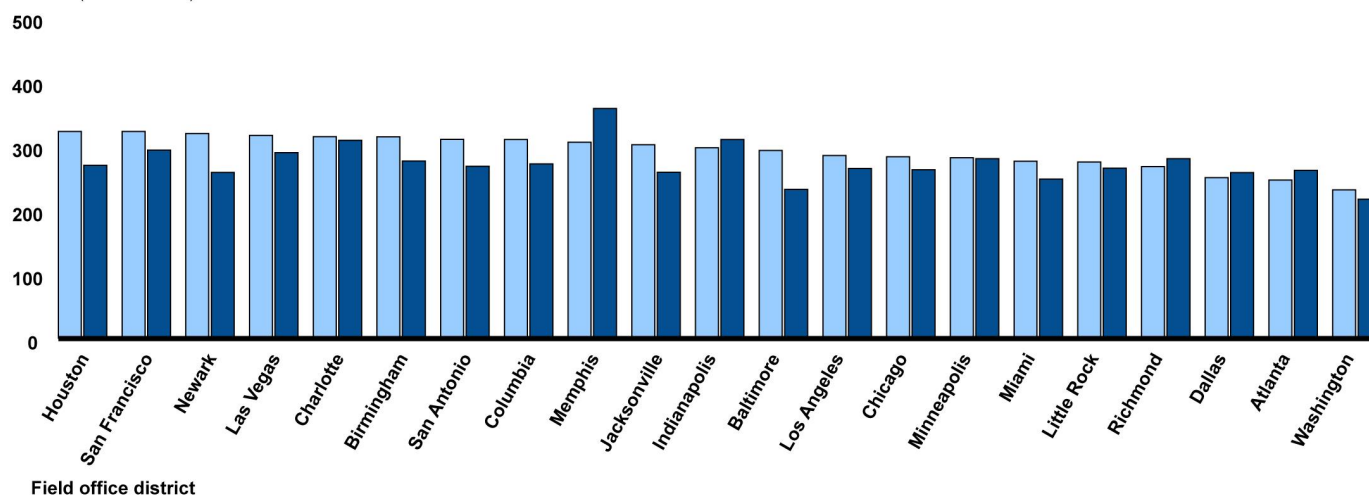
¹Our analysis uses the total district points per special agent and uses the methodology used by the Secret Service to weight each performance metric.

Figure 13: Variable Cost per Special Agent Point Earned, Fiscal Years 2013-2014

Dollars (in thousands)



Dollars (in thousands)



Field office district

Fiscal year 2014

Fiscal year 2013

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service cost and performance data. | GAO-16-288

Further, we found, on the basis of our analysis of changes in the cost per special agent point from fiscal years 2013 to 2014, that 35 of the 42 field office districts experienced an increase in the cost per special agent point from fiscal years 2013 to 2014, with the increases ranging from \$1,507 to \$100,546. Specifically, we found the following:

- The Denver, Kansas City, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore Field Office Districts had the highest increases in cost per special agent point from fiscal years 2013 to 2014, ranging from \$60,664 to \$100,546.
- The Minneapolis, Oklahoma City, Charlotte, Seattle, and Cincinnati Field Office Districts had the lowest increases in cost per special agent point from fiscal years 2013 to 2014, ranging from \$1,507 to \$7,798.

Since special agent points are a direct reflection of how the special agents are meeting the agency's mission needs, determining those districts with higher and lower costs per special agent point is a key indicator of whether the agency is maximizing its domestic office resources. Further, as the Secret Service collects additional special agent point data over the coming years, this type of analysis could allow the agency to capture best practices for those districts with lower costs per special agent point that could be shared with costlier districts.

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

December 30, 2015

David C. Maurer
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-16-288, "U.S. SECRET SERVICE: Data Analyses Could Better Inform the Domestic Field Office Structure"

Dear Mr. Maurer:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note GAO's recognition of the steps the U.S. Secret Service has taken to develop a performance system, which aligns with its missions, and facilitates an assessment of the varying contributions of domestic field offices. The development of these performance metrics helps the Secret Service to analyze the needs of each office and deploy scarce resources in the most efficient manner possible.

The draft report contained four recommendations with which the Department concurs. Specifically, GAO recommended that the Director of the Secret Service:

Recommendation 1: Implement a review process to ensure time and attendance costs used for recording cost data at each domestic office are correctly established and appropriately attributed to the correct office.

Response: Concur. Time and attendance codes for each field office, resident office, and resident agency were established in 2006. Codes for specific functions (e.g., protection, management and administration, etc.) were established and implemented in 2013. To ensure appropriate codes are used, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer / Enterprise Financial Systems Division analyzes bi-weekly report data and notifies the Office of Human Resources / Benefits and Payroll Division where action is required to accurately

attribute time and attendance data to the correct office. The Payroll Division issues notices to the affected offices for timekeepers to effect necessary corrective actions. As an additional step, the Office of Human Resources / Payroll Division will run monthly reports to ensure employee office codes in the time and attendance system align with the office codes in the payroll system of record. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): December 31, 2015.

Recommendation 2: Conduct an analysis using cost and performance data and consider using other data, such as travel data, to assess and inform its domestic field office structure.

Response: Concur. The Secret Service agrees that it is important to look at data to make informed assessments of the field structure. The Secret Service analysis and measurements of its field performance evaluates many variables as they relate to the integrated mission between law enforcement and protective support. Cost data is one factor that can assist in an evaluation strategy but comparing cost data to performance data presents the following difficulties that the Secret Service would have to take into account.

First, the regular restructuring of field offices would be very expensive, time-consuming, and disruptive to operations. The Secret Service works with General Services Administration to negotiate long-term leases of 10-30 years in order to obtain lower costs. Secret Service field offices are also often co-located in buildings with federal partners such as the United States Attorney's Office, which is useful for task forces, joint operations, information sharing, etc. Many of these are also federal buildings owned by GSA.

Second, the Secret Service has always utilized data when developing the field offices structure. Many studies have found that financial crime is based in large population centers. At least 70 of the top 100 largest cities or metropolitan areas have a permanent Secret Service presence.

Third, special agent travel is one of many factors utilized when determining field office structure. Although, travel patterns are often unpredictable, driven by the geopolitical climate and criminal trends throughout the country, field office structure decisions often involve reviewing these variables as they pertain to the integrated protective and investigative mission. For example, agents rarely travel to Iowa and New Hampshire unless it is an election year. Further, a historical trend would depict numerous trips to Jackson Hole, WY during Vice President Cheney's tenure, but since his departure from office, the Secret Service has realized significantly less travel to this location. As protectees cycle through their term, many travel locations change, which affects long-term assessments of the field office structure.

Fourth, many investigations span multiple jurisdictions and transcend many different fiscal years. This impediment affects the accuracy of the results and usefulness of a simple cost verses performance analysis.

In the near future, the Secret Service's Office of Strategic Planning and Policy with the Office of Investigations will develop a methodology to incorporate cost data into its analysis of the field structure. ECD: September 30, 2016.

Recommendation 3: Maintain a record of the analyses performed and the results.

Response: Concur. The Secret Service's Office of Strategic Planning and Policy maintains many measurement variables and will maintain any analyses completed on the field office structure. ECD: September 30, 2016.

Recommendation 4: Enhance its travel request and approval process to ensure that the trip purpose is accurately documented, effectively reviewed and approved, and accurately recorded.

Response: Concur. Secret Service's Risk Management and Assurance Branch (RM&A) conducts Office of Management and Budget A-123 internal controls assessments on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer. These tests include the review of travel vouchers. During Fiscal Year 2016, RM&A will conduct validity tests to ensure trip purposes are accurately documented, effectively reviewed and approved, and accurately recorded. Additionally, RM&A will work with the Financial Management Division to correct any deficiencies found during testing of the travel request and approval process. ECD: March 31, 2016.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Jim H. Crumacker, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Diana C. Maurer, (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Joseph P. Cruz (Assistant Director), Lisa Canini, Miriam Hill, Robin Nye, and Zachary Sivo made key contributions to this report. Also contributing to this report were Pedro Almoguera, Billy Commons, Dominick Dale, Patricia Donahue, Emily Gunn, Michele Fejfar, Eric Hauswirth, John Mingus, Ben Nelson, and Jerry Sandau.

Appendix VI: Accessible Data

Agency Comment Letter

Text of Appendix IV:
Comments from the
Department of Homeland
Security

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Sincerely,

Jim H. Crumpacker, CIA, CFE

Director

Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Data Tables

Data Table for Figure 3: Total Cost of the Secret Service Domestic Field Office Structure by Year and Cost Category, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Note: Dollars in millions

Fiscal year	Salaries and benefits	Infrastructure	Travel	Other services
2009	393.114	53.9659	50.7769	7.99357
2010	405.49	54.0141	33.6294	6.43045
2011	421.057	57.0961	26.8013	6.41833
2012	441.165	56.5277	45.5104	5.565
2013	426.881	53.4962	40.1161	5.73084
2014	410.246	56.2648	33.5572	5.98214

Data Table for Figure 4: Average Annual Cost of the Secret Service Domestic Field Office Structure by Cost Category, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Salaries and benefits	81%	\$416.3 million
Infrastructure	11%	\$55.3 million
Travel	7%	\$38.4 million
Other costs	1%	\$6.4 million

11% if Infrastructure is sub-categorized into following group.

Leased office space	78%	\$43 million
Parking	9%	\$4.9 million
Tenant improvement	9%	\$4.9 million
Federal Protective Service	3%	\$1.7 million
Overtime utilities	<1%	\$454,616
Antenna	<1%	\$182,184
Other services (repairs)	<1%	\$80,292
Preventive maintenance	<1%	\$34,489

Data Table for Figure 5: Average Total Secret Service Field Office District Costs, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

	Total cost (Dollars in millions)
New York	66.8964
Washington, D.C.	50.4296
Los Angeles	38.5861
Chicago	33.1697
Miami	33.1566
Dallas	20.6121
Houston	18.6127
Philadelphia	17.4953
San Francisco	16.93
Atlanta	16.2416
Boston	15.53
Newark	11.8717
Detroit	11.3993
Charlotte	11.2238
Baltimore	8.26308

	Total cost (Dollars in millions)
Seattle	7.89135
Denver	7.5528
Kansas City	7.46534
Birmingham	7.16224
Honolulu	7.08755
Cleveland	7.03945
Buffalo	6.65571
Phoenix	6.35798
Columbia	6.08471
Richmond	6.04892
Cincinnati	5.94458
San Antonio	5.68137
Las Vegas	5.32646
Tampa	5.29823
Jacksonville	5.28755
Nashville	5.2834
New Orleans	4.92155
Pittsburgh	4.899
Minneapolis	4.85783
Louisville	4.63973
San Diego	4.18736
Oklahoma City	4.05522
Orlando	3.87999
St. Louis	3.52072
Memphis	3.39285
Indianapolis	3.30659
Little Rock	3.05015

Data Table for Figure 6: Estimated Dollar Value of Total Assets Seized by Secret Service Domestic Offices, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Fiscal year	Estimated value of total assets seized (dollars in millions)
2009	67.3269
2010	82.3117
2011	82.5389
2012	346.185
2013	75.8634

Fiscal year	Estimated value of total assets seized (dollars in millions)
2014	120.325

Data Table for Figure 7: Value of Counterfeit Funds Seized by Secret Service Domestic Offices, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Fiscal year	Total counterfeit funds removed from circulation (dollars in millions)
2009	28.1148
2010	28.2132
2011	20.7985
2012	18.2651
2013	25.4841
2014	22.6061

Data Table for Figure 8: Total Arrests Made by Secret Service Domestic Offices, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Fiscal year	Total federal arrests	Total state arrests
2009	3399	4257
2010	3548	4353
2011	3465	4438
2012	2968	4370
2013	3017	4079
2014	2475	3306

Data Table for Figure 9: Total Protective Travel Stops in Secret Service Domestic Office Districts, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Fiscal year	Total protective stops	Total travel days
2009	6384	10989
2010	5905	9932
2011	5597	9613
2012	6386	11134
2013	6045	10117
2014	5731	10266

Data Table for Figure 10: Purpose of Secret Service Domestic Office Personnel Travel, Fiscal Years 2009-2014

Fiscal year	Protection	Investigation and training	Support
2009	16648	3447	986
2010	9343	3842	1087
2011	9810	3787	990
2012	25830	2264	795
2013	15303	1559	569
2014	9640	1772	1081

Data Table for Figure 13: Variable Cost per Special Agent Point Earned, Fiscal Years 2013-2014

Field office district	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2013
Pittsburgh	405207	328777
Tampa	385119	336723
New Orleans	372140	362748
Denver	366491	265945
Boston	363233	330798
San Diego	362973	344988
Phoenix	355131	270176
Orlando	352861	377921
New York	344801	306621
Buffalo	344710	284771
Honolulu	339496	374920
Philadelphia	338940	297710
Detroit	335565	281374
Oklahoma City	333695	328930
Kansas City	327128	240931
Cincinnati	326931	319133
Nashville	326856	271280
Seattle	326652	320146
St. Louis	326377	314855
Cleveland	323051	265607
Louisville	322614	280517
Houston	322420	269370
San Francisco	322310	293264

Field office district	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2013
Newark	319100	258408
Las Vegas	316108	289261
Charlotte	314148	308417
Birmingham	313830	276182
San Antonio	310054	268114
Columbia	309753	271614
Memphis	305532	358208
Jacksonville	301604	258583
Indianapolis	296953	309667
Baltimore	292644	231980
Los Angeles	284759	264449
Chicago	282874	262607
Minneapolis	281453	279946
Miami	275998	248023
Little Rock	274701	264935
Richmond	267420	279832
Dallas	250141	258028
Atlanta	246550	261683
Washington	231114	216600

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