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U.S. SECRET SERVICE

Further Progress Made Implementing the Protective Mission Panel Recommendations

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Why GAO Did This Study

The Secret Service, a component of the Department of Homeland Security is responsible for providing physical protection for the President, the Vice President, their immediate families, and visiting foreign dignitaries, as well as for the White House complex.

The Secret Service Overtime Pay Extension Act includes a provision for GAO to report on the extent of progress made by the Secret Service in implementing the Panel's recommendations. This report addresses the progress that the Secret Service has made toward implementing the Panel's recommendations. For this report, GAO reviewed relevant Secret Service planning and implementation documents, analyzed agency training data from fiscal years 2014 through 2020, and interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

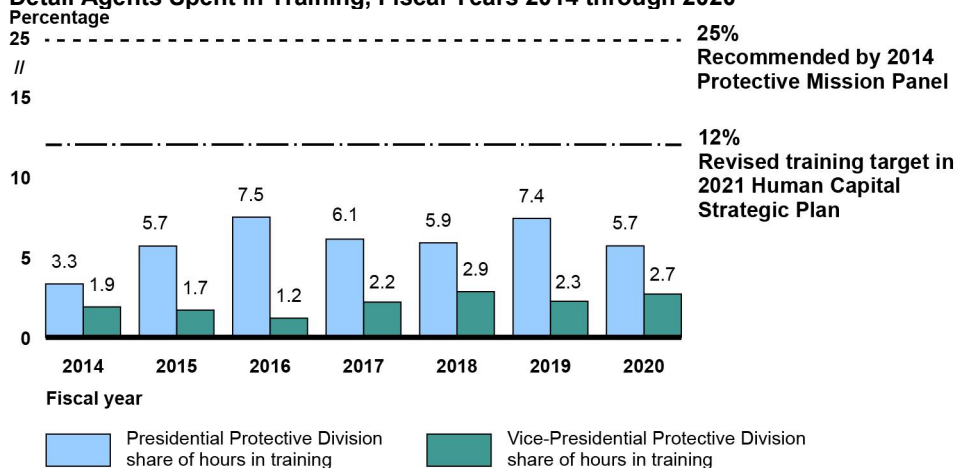
In prior work, GAO recommended that Secret Service: (1) develop and implement a plan to ensure that special agents assigned to the Presidential and Vice Presidential Protective Divisions reach annual training targets, and (2) develop and implement a policy that documents the process for collecting complete and appropriate data on Uniformed Division officer training. DHS concurred with the two recommendations and has taken steps to address them, but planning and policy development steps remain. We provided a copy of this report to DHS. On review of our draft report, DHS informed us it had no comment.

What GAO Found

In December 2014, the U.S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel—an independent panel of experts established to review White House security and other aspects of Secret Service operations—made 19 recommendations related to training and personnel, technology and operations, and leadership. The agency has made progress implementing the 19 Protective Mission Panel (Panel) recommendations. Specifically, the Secret Service has taken actions to address 13 of the 19 recommendations, including two since GAO's last assessment in 2019. For example, the agency revised its budget processes to incorporate principles of mission-based budgeting in its budget formulation process. In February 2019, the Secret Service formally incorporated a new budgeting process and, in August 2021, issued its *Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*, which includes revised staffing models to be used in developing the budget. In addition, the agency developed and implemented its Leadership Development System framework across all occupational categories in the agency. The framework is intended to promote leadership within individuals, teams, and projects and result in a positive effect on performance and agency mission accomplishment.

The Secret Service is in the process of implementing the remaining six recommendations. For example, the Panel found in its report that the security incident of September 19, 2014, when an intruder jumped the north fence and entered the White House, arose from a "catastrophic failure of training." The Panel recommended that the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Protective Divisions train for 25 percent of their work time. In August 2021, the Secret Service, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of Management and Budget, established a new training target—at least 12 percent of work hours by fiscal year 2025—that takes the availability of resources into account. (See fig.).

Share of Regular Work Hours That Presidential and Vice-Presidential Protective Detail Agents Spent in Training, Fiscal Years 2014 through 2020



Source: GAO analysis of Secret Service data. | GAO-22-105100

View [GAO-22-105100](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or goodwin@gao.gov.

Data table for Share of Regular Work Hours That Presidential and Vice-Presidential Protective Detail Agents Spent in Training, Fiscal Years 2014 through 2020

Year	Presidential Protective Division share of hours in training	Vice Presidential Protective Division share of hours in training
2014	3.33	1.9
2015	5.69	1.7
2016	7.49	1.2
2017	6.12	2.2
2018	5.89	2.85
2019	7.41	2.25
2020	5.7	2.7

GAO analysis of secret service data. | GAO-22-105100

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Abbreviations

APT	Administrative, Professional, and Technical staff
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
eFactors	evaluative factors
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
Panel	U.S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel
PPD	Presidential Protective Division
VPD	Vice-Presidential Protective Division

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January 26, 2022

Congressional Committees

On September 19, 2014, an intruder jumped over the north fence of the White House complex, passed several layers of security, evaded U.S. Secret Service personnel, and entered the White House through the north portico doors. The President was not in the White House at the time; however, this episode highlighted several areas in which the Secret Service—a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—needed to improve its performance.

In response, the Secretary of Homeland Security established the U.S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel (the Panel)—a temporary body charged with independently reviewing security issues at the Secret Service and the White House and providing recommendations to a new Secret Service Director. In December 2014, the Panel issued its report, concluding that the September 2014 incident occurred in large part because of a “catastrophic failure in training.” The Panel made 19 recommendations related to training and personnel; perimeter security, technology, and operations; and leadership.¹

In 2019, we reviewed the Secret Service’s implementation of the Panel’s recommendations. We found that the agency had implemented 11 of the 19 recommendations and had made some progress with implementing the remaining eight recommendations.² In our 2019 report, we made two recommendations to the Secret Service related to training.³ The Secret Service agreed with the recommendations but has not yet fully addressed them, as discussed later in this report.

¹See U.S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel, *Report from the United States Secret Service Protective Mission Panel to the Secretary of Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 15, 2014).

²GAO, *U.S. Secret Service: Further Actions Needed to Fully Address Protective Mission Panel Recommendations*, [GAO-19-415](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 22, 2019).

³We recommended that the Secret Service (1) develop a plan to ensure that special agents assigned to the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Protective Divisions reach annual training targets, given current and planned staffing levels; and (2) develop a policy that documents the process for collecting complete Uniformed Division officer training data and establishes the types of information that should be collected. See [GAO-19-415](#)

The Secret Service Overtime Pay Extension Act includes a provision for us to report on the extent of progress made by the Secret Service in implementing the recommendations of the 2014 Protective Mission Panel.⁴ This report addresses the progress that the Secret Service has made toward implementing the Panel's recommendations.

To assess the Secret Service's progress in implementing the 19 recommendations the Panel made in 2014, we reviewed (1) the agency's efforts to implement each of the Panel's recommendations, including those we found had been implemented in our 2019 report based on the Secret Service's efforts that were in place at the time; (2) the actions taken or planned to implement the remaining eight unimplemented Panel recommendations; and (3) any implementation challenges faced and steps taken to overcome such challenges.⁵ To do so, we reviewed relevant documents, such as the Secret Service's *Fiscal Years 2018-2022 Strategic Plan*, *Communication Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2018-2022*, and *Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*. We also reviewed agency policy guidance and directives that the Secret Service issued to implement the Panel's recommendations, such as its 2019 directive establishing its Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, and Evaluation cycle.⁶ We also interviewed and received written responses from Secret Service officials from relevant offices across the agency, such as the offices of Protective Operations; Investigations; Training; Technical Development and Mission Support; Strategic Planning and Policy; and Human Resources. To corroborate Secret Service officials' oral and written statements, we compared their statements to Secret Service documentation.

We reviewed the actions taken by the Secret Service to determine whether they implemented the recommendations of the Panel's 2014 report, as well as the recommendations of our 2019 report. For those recommendations that we found were implemented in our 2019 report, we reassessed the Secret Service's implementation efforts to ensure that they had maintained implementation. For each recommendation, we determined that either the Secret Service's implementation of the recommendation was still in progress or that the agency had implemented the recommendation. For recommendations that we consider

⁴See Pub. L. No. 116-269, § 4, 134 Stat. 3323-3324 (2020).

⁵See [GAO-19-415](#).

⁶See U. S. Secret Service, *Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, and Evaluation (PPBEE)*, COO-01 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 21, 2019).

implemented, we recognize that the Secret Service may need to take further actions to ensure that the new activity or process continues as intended.

To determine the extent to which the Secret Service had met training goals set in response to relevant Panel recommendations, we assessed data on special agents' time expended from fiscal years 2014 through 2020. Specifically, we obtained and analyzed data from the Secret Service's Monthly Activity Reporting System on special agents' self-reported time to determine the share of time that special agents across the agency—including those assigned to the Presidential Protective Division (PPD) and the Vice-Presidential Protective Division (VPD)—spent on investigation and protective assignments, training, and other duties. The data describe how many hours each special agent (except for members of the Senior Executive Service) reported conducting protection assignments, conducting investigations, or taking part in training. To determine the share of work hours that special agents assigned to PPD and VPD spent in training, we compared training hours spent with regular work hours data for fiscal years 2014 through 2020.⁷ We assessed the reliability of the data from the Monthly Activity Reporting System by reviewing relevant documentation and interviewing knowledgeable Secret Service officials. We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable for our reporting objective.

We conducted this performance audit from March 2021 to February 2022 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.

⁷Regular work hours exclude Scheduled Overtime and Law Enforcement Availability Pay. Secret Service special agents, as federal criminal investigators, are eligible for Law Enforcement Availability Pay, which is intended to compensate criminal investigators who often work excessive and unusual hours and who work an annual average of 2 or more unscheduled duty hours per workday.

Background

Secret Service Roles and Responsibilities

The Secret Service carries out an integrated mission of protection and investigations. Its protective mission is to provide physical protection for such persons as the President, the Vice President, their immediate families, and visiting foreign dignitaries, as well as facilities such as the White House complex.⁸ Its investigative mission is to investigate a wide range of crimes that threaten protected persons, such as the President, or U.S. financial systems, such as financial and computer-based fraud.⁹

As of September 2021, the Secret Service had approximately 7,900 total employees located in Washington, D.C., and its 161 field offices throughout the world (including 142 domestic offices and 19 international offices). Secret Service personnel belong to one of four classes: special agents; Uniformed Division officers; Administrative, Professional, and Technical (APT) staff; and Technical Law Enforcement staff.

- **Special agents:** The Office of Protective Operations is the principal office responsible for providing protection.¹⁰ Within the Office of Protective Operations, special agents protect the President, the Vice President, their immediate families, and other senior U.S. government officials. These special agents are assigned to the PPD or the VPD. Special agents assigned to these divisions protect the President and the Vice President when they are in the White House or at any other location. For example, Secret Service special agents protected Vice President Michael Pence on January 6, 2021, while he conducted his duties as President of the Senate to certify the results of the 2020 presidential election. Secret Service special agents also protected Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, who was scheduled to attend the

⁸See 18 U.S.C. §§ 3056(a), (e)(1), 3056A(a) for the range of the Secret Service's protective responsibilities.

⁹See 18 U.S.C. § 3056(b) for the range of crimes within the Secret Service's investigative mission.

¹⁰According to agency officials, the Secret Service leverages support from across the agency to implement protective operations. Those offices include the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support, the Office of Strategic Intelligence and Information, and the Dignitary Protective Division, Special Services Divisions, and the Special Operations Division within the Office of Protective Operations.

certification of the results of the 2020 election.¹¹ Special agents also protect former presidents, their spouses, and minor children; major presidential and vice presidential candidates; and events designated by the Secretary of Homeland Security as National Special Security Events.¹²

Special agents begin their careers working on the Secret Service's investigative operations; investigating financial crimes from a field office; and working closely with local, state, and federal law enforcement. During this time, special agents are exposed to the protective operations, such as when a protectee comes to town and the protectee's detail needs reinforcement from the local office or when the protectee travels and needs additional personnel.

- **Uniformed Division officers:** The Uniformed Division, which is also part of the Office of Protective Operations, is charged with protecting facilities and venues, in addition to Secret Service protectees themselves. This includes protecting and controlling access to the White House complex—which includes the White House itself, the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, and the Treasury Department—and the Vice President's residence. The Uniformed Division is also charged with protecting foreign government embassies in Washington, D.C.
- **Administrative, Professional, and Technical staff:** APT is composed of a wide range of positions that support the agency's day-to-day operations in Washington, D.C. and its field offices, including attorneys, accountants, analysts, biologists, fingerprint specialists, photographers, and electronics engineers.
- **Technical Law Enforcement staff:** In 2018, the Secret Service created a personnel category called Technical Law Enforcement and reclassified about 300 employees from APT to Technical Law Enforcement. Technical Law Enforcement personnel directly supplement and support special agents and Uniformed Division officers in their protection and investigative duties—often in armed capacities. They are trained in both protective and investigative

¹¹According to Secret Service officials, Secret Service special agents and Uniformed Division officers responded to the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, to provide assistance to both of these protective details.

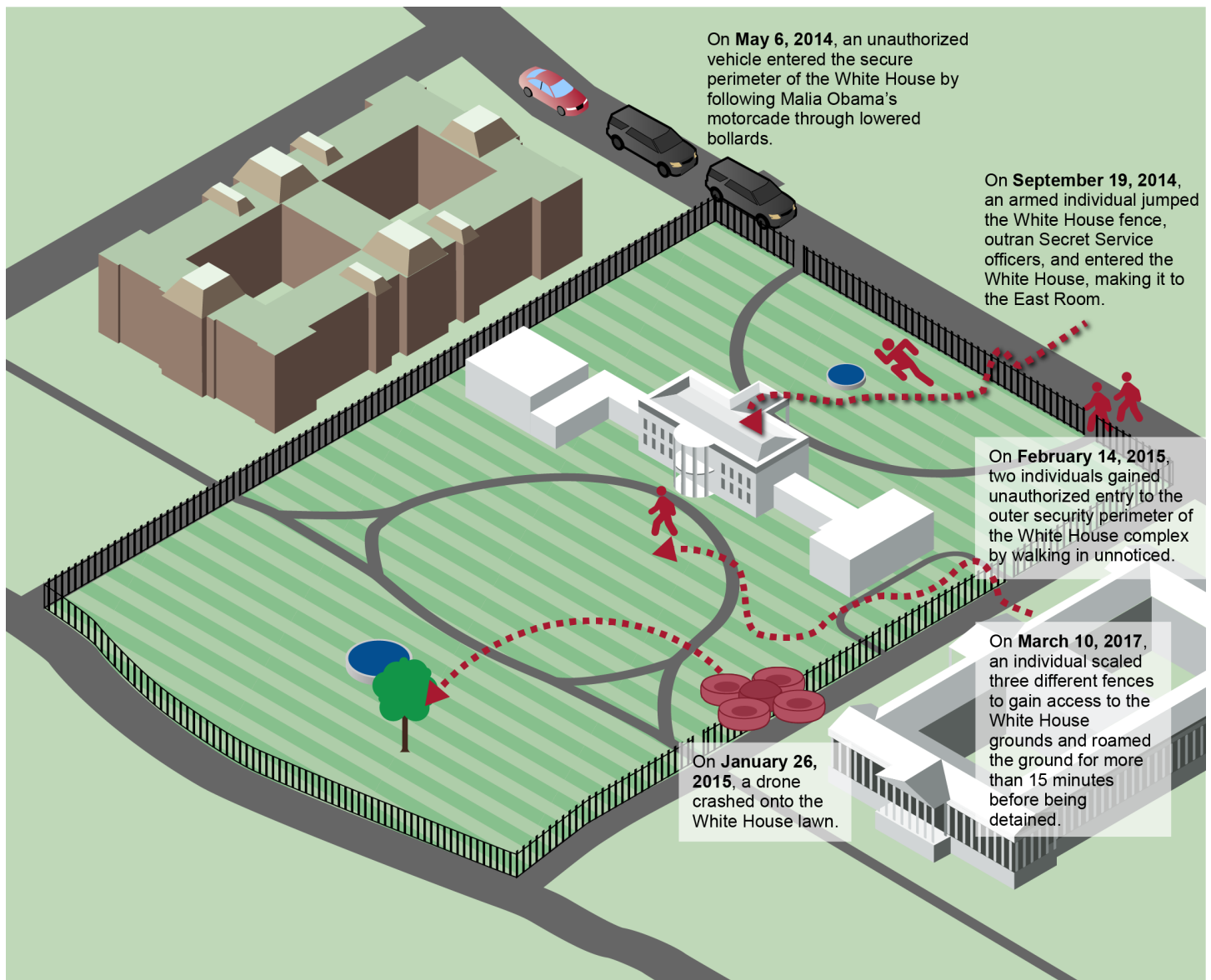
¹²An event is designated as a National Special Security Event by the Secretary of Homeland Security based on anticipated attendance by U.S. officials and foreign dignitaries and the size and significance of the event. National Special Security Events include, but are not limited to, presidential inaugurations, presidential nominating conventions, major sports events, and major international meetings.

techniques but are also specialized in key operational and technological focus areas to support the integrated mission of investigation and protection.

White House Security Protection-Related Incidents in 2012 through 2017

The Secret Service experienced several protection-related security incidents on the White House complex from 2012 through 2017. These incidents included attempts to gain access to the White House complex by foot, car, and air. These and other incidents highlight some of the many challenges the Secret Service confronts while providing protection. See figure 1 for a description of selected security incidents.

Figure 1: Selected U.S. Secret Service Incidents on the White House Complex, 2014 - 2017



Source: GAO analysis of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *U.S. Secret Service: An Agency in Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 9, 2015); and U.S. Secret Service Press Release, *Official Statement: White House Fence Jumper*, GPA-09-17 (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 17, 2017). | GAO-22-105100

Text of Figure 1: Selected U.S. Secret Service Incidents on the White House Complex, 2014 - 2017

- On May 6, 2014, an unauthorized vehicle entered the secure perimeter of the White House by following Malia Obama's motorcade through lowered bollards.

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- On January 26, 2015, a drone crashed onto the White House lawn.
 - On September 19, 2014, an armed individual jumped the White House fence, outran Secret Service officers, and entered the White House, making it to the East Room.
 - On February 14, 2015, two individuals gained unauthorized entry to the outer security perimeter of the White House complex by walking in unnoticed.
 - On March 10, 2017, an individual scaled three different fences to gain access to the White House grounds and roamed the ground for more than 15 minutes before being detained.

Source: GAO analysis of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform information. | GAO-22-105100

The Secret Service Has Made Further Progress in Implementing the Panel's Recommendations

As of November 2021, the Secret Service has implemented 13 of the Panel's 19 recommendations and is in the process of implementing the remaining six recommendations. Notably, since our 2019 report, the Secret Service has taken actions that meet Panel recommendations related to presenting a zero-based budget, and establishing a leadership development system—recommendations 10 and 19, respectively. Table 1 summarizes the progress the agency has made in addressing each recommendation as of November 2021. See also appendix 1, which provides further details of the actions the Secret Service has taken to address each Panel recommendation.

Table 1: Summary of the U.S. Secret Service’s Implementation of the Protective Mission Panel’s 2014 Recommendations, as of November 2021

Protective Mission Panel (Panel) recommendation	Status	Summary of actions taken by the U.S. Secret Service
<p>1. Provide a true “Fourth Shift” for training the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Protective Divisions, so that they spend 2 weeks out of every 8 in training (i.e., 25 percent), and ensure that Uniformed Division officers are in training for no less than 10 percent of their time.</p>	Implementation in progress	<p>The Secret Service instituted a fourth and fifth shift for its Presidential Protective Division (PPD) and a fourth shift for its Vice-Presidential Protective Division (VPD). The fourth shift for each division was to provide time for agents to, participate in training and educational opportunities and take leave. The Secret Service, however, determined in 2021 that, given the availability of resources, it would set its PPD and VPD agents’ training hours target to be at least 12 percent by fiscal year 2025. Our analysis of Secret Service training data shows that special agents have increased their percentage of training hours since fiscal year 2014 from 3.3 percent of regular work hours to between 5.7 and 7.5 percent between fiscal years 2015 through 2020. In fiscal year 2014 VPD special agents trained 1.9 percent of regular work hours, with their percentage of training hours varying between 1.2 and 2.9 percent between fiscal years 2015 through 2020. Regarding Uniformed Division officers, specifically, the Secret Service told us that these officers spent an average of 7.1 percent of their work hours in training during fiscal years 2019 through 2020. We were unable to confirm this information because the Secret Service has not fully implemented its policies for capturing data on Uniformed Division officer training, as we recommended in 2019.^a</p>
<p>2. Implement integrated training focused on ensuring that all teams at the White House know their roles in responding to specific threats.</p>	Implemented	<p>The Secret Service reported that it conducted 218 drills from 2019 through June 2021. Secret Service officials said that it conducts drills, exercises, and scenarios across personnel units. In addition, the Secret Service continues to offer its Emergency Action and Building Defense training to Uniformed Division personnel and Secret Service special teams, such as countersniper units.^b</p>
<p>3. Train in conditions that replicate the physical environment in which they will operate.</p>	Implementation in progress	<p>To train in conditions that replicate the White House, the Secret Service secured approval in 2017 to build a White House Mockup Training Facility at the James J. Rowley Training Center in Beltsville, Maryland. According to Secret Service officials, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has not yet allotted funding for the project.</p>
<p>4. Increase the Uniformed Division, as quickly as can be appropriately managed, by an initial 200 persons, and the PPD by 85 positions. Perform additional analyses and, likely, add further personnel as necessary.</p>	Implemented	<p>The Secret Service increased the number of Uniformed Division officers by 316 officers between fiscal year 2014 and July 2020. In addition, the Secret Service increased the number of special agents assigned to PPD by 165 during the same period of time. The Secret Service’s <i>Fiscal Years 2021–2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan</i> sets a target for the agency to have 4,474 special agents and 1,805 Uniformed Division officers in fiscal year 2025.</p>

Protective Mission Panel (Panel) recommendation	Status	Summary of actions taken by the U.S. Secret Service
5. Reform and professionalize recruiting, hiring, promotion, and a rotation process that puts the most talented, capable individuals in place as efficiently as possible.	Implemented	In 2019, Secret Service officials reported actions intended to strengthen recruiting and clarify the promotion process, such as issuing a new Merit Promotion Process for Uniformed Division officers. In July 2021, Secret Service officials told us that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected its initiatives to reduce hiring time for special agents and Uniformed Division officers. Secret Service officials told us that they have maintained efforts to reform and professionalize its recruiting, hiring, promotion, and rotation processes. For example, the Secret Service’s Chief Human Capital Officer continues to run the agency’s Office of Human Resources and is a professional administrator. Secret Service officials stated that they have completed new actions that aim to strengthen recruiting and clarify the promotion process, such as issuing a new Merit Promotion Process for Uniformed Division officers.
6. Ensure that the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support proactively reviews and refreshes its technological footprint. The Secret Service should continue to receive dedicated funds for technology, both within its own budget and within DHS’s Science and Technology’s budget, to accomplish these tasks.	Implementation in progress	To address current technical capabilities and future needs, Secret Service officials reported completing, but not finalizing, a draft of the Fiscal Years 2021–2026 Strategic Implementation Plan for Protective Technologies. Agency officials stated in 2019 that they planned to finalize and execute this plan as one of the actions to implement this recommendation. However, in September 2021, agency officials reported that they have not finalized the strategy because it is in a pilot phase; they provided no estimate for when the pilot will end.
7. Replace the outer fence that surrounds the 18 acres of the White House Complex to give Secret Service personnel more time to react to intrusions.	Implementation in progress	The Secret Service reported that construction began on the new White House fence in July 2019. As of November 2021, Secret Service stated that three of eight fence sections, accounting for 54 percent of Phase I construction, are complete. The Secret Service had planned to complete Phase I construction by October 2022. However, officials stated that construction has been delayed due to (1) events held on the White House south grounds; (2) unanticipated events, such as protests; and (3) unforeseen site conditions, such as the discovery of power lines. The Secret Service estimates that it will complete Phase I construction of the new fence by March 2023.
8. Clearly communicate agency priorities, give effect to those priorities through agency actions, and align agency operations with agency priorities.	Implementation in progress	The Secret Service issued its 5-year strategic plan in 2018 and its <i>Fiscal Years 2021–2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan</i> in 2021, among other planning documents. In these documents, the agency communicated its priorities. The Human Capital Strategic Plan, for example, is intended to address how the agency’s projected resources can support staffing levels to fulfill the Secret Service’s priorities for its integrated mission. The plan includes updated, mission-based staffing targets for all workforce categories, including special agents. The Secret Service has also continued to communicate its priorities by maintaining the efforts we reported in 2019 to oversee internal and external communication. However, the Secret Service has not fully aligned its operations with its priorities. This is because, for example, the agency has not significantly increased the number of training hours completed by its special agents. In addition, from fiscal years 2017 through 2020, Secret Service staffing levels fell short of the agency’s planned staffing levels for 3 of these 4 fiscal years by 275 individuals (190 special agents and 85 Uniformed Division officers).

Protective Mission Panel (Panel) recommendation	Status	Summary of actions taken by the U.S. Secret Service
9. Promote specialized expertise in the agency's budget, workforce, and technology functions.	Implemented	The Secret Service has reorganized the agency to promote specialized expertise in certain functions. For example, in 2015, the Secret Service established the position of Chief Operating Officer to run the agency's business functions. In addition, the Chief Operating Officer oversees several senior leadership positions drawn from outside of the Secret Service's special agent ranks. Secret Service officials reported that the agency has also increased the number of non-special-agent professionals hired into positions for its mission support operations by 320 positions since fiscal year 2015.
10. Present a zero-based or mission-based budget that will provide sufficient resources to accomplish the agency's mission, beginning immediately, by working within DHS to adopt a workforce staffing model.	Implemented ^c	The Secret Service has revised its budget processes to incorporate the principles of mission-based budgeting in its budget formulation process. ^d Under mission-based budgeting, the agency is to rebuild the budget by clearly defining the agency's mission and desired outcomes and determining what funding level is needed to obtain those outcomes. This is in contrast to making incremental changes from the prior year's budget. Specifically, the Secret Service formally incorporated the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, and Evaluation cycle into its policy for its budgeting process in February 2019. ^d In August 2021, the Secret Service also issued its Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan, which includes revised staffing models.
11. Create more opportunities for Uniformed Division officers and special agents to provide input on their mission, and train the Secret Service's mid- and lower-level managers to encourage, value, and respond to such feedback.	Implemented	The Secret Service requires all new supervisors to complete a curriculum on topics related to workforce communications to facilitate communication between employees and supervisors. The curriculum is intended for special agents, Uniformed Division officers, and APT personnel. Additionally, to improve communication between the workforce and senior leaders, the Secret Service utilizes an online platform for employees to submit ideas and feedback to supervisors.
12. Lead the federal protective force community.	Implemented	The Secret Service has engaged with other protective forces across the federal government, such as DHS's Federal Protective Service, through various mechanisms. According to Secret Service officials, the agency participates in various information-sharing mechanisms that the Secret Service has established or that have been established by partners. For example, in May 2018, the Secret Service implemented its Protective Intelligence eXchange —its threat management database— to allow federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to share protective intelligence information. As of November 2021, the Secret Service reports that there are over 150 member partners participating in the program and that they continue to conduct outreach to increase participation.
13. Receive periodic, outside assessments of the threats to, and strategies for, protecting the White House compound.	Implemented	Since 2015, the Secret Service reports it has regularly engaged with outside partners to (1) independently assess the threats to the White House complex and (2) assess the Secret Service's protective activities to identify potential vulnerabilities and validate the agency's strategies' operational effectiveness. The Secret Service reported that it had suspended these assessments in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but had subsequently resumed them by completing an assessment in October 2021.
14. Resume participation in international forums with comparable protective services of friendly nations.	Implemented	The Secret Service, through the Office of Investigations, maintains relationships with international partners to share information. The Secret Service participates in meetings in support of major events worldwide and shares information through training efforts as well.

Protective Mission Panel (Panel) recommendation	Status	Summary of actions taken by the U.S. Secret Service
15. Give leadership's priorities and reforms the agency's sustained attention, and hold the agency accountable through to their completion.	Implemented	In 2015, the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy was tasked with overseeing and tracking the implementation of the Panel's recommendations. This office also coordinated the development of key strategy documents to guide the agency's efforts. Further, Secret Service officials reported that the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy evaluates current and future agency needs and requirements, such as monthly and quarterly reports on key metrics. These include metrics and indicators for hiring and training goals.
16. Implement a disciplinary system in a consistent manner that demonstrates zero tolerance for failures that are incompatible with its zero-failure mission.	Implemented	The Secret Service established the Office of Integrity in 2013 to centralize and standardize the disciplinary system across the Secret Service. According to agency officials, for each substantiated incident of employee misconduct, the Chief Integrity Officer and Deputy Chief Integrity Officer are to determine what formal disciplinary action, if any, is warranted. Further, the Discipline Review Board, composed of senior representatives from each directorate, oversees the disciplinary system and hears appeals from most personnel. Disciplinary outcomes are detailed in an annual report to ensure transparency within the agency.
17. Hold forces accountable for performance by using front-line supervisors to constantly test readiness.	Implementation in progress	Secret Service officials told us that, as of November 2021, operational readiness drills are expected to be conducted for the Uniformed Division personnel at least once per month, if protectees' schedules permit. In addition, front-line supervisors (i.e., sergeants and lieutenants) are to conduct random spot-checks on a daily basis. This recommendation is in progress because work remains to hold forces accountable.
18. The next Director of the Secret Service should be a strong leader from outside the agency who has a protective, law enforcement, or military background and who can drive cultural change in the organization and move the Secret Service forward into a new era.	Implemented	We reported in 2019 that Randolph "Tex" Alles was appointed as the Secret Service Director in 2017 and was in that position until 2019. Mr. Alles had not worked at the Secret Service prior to taking on this role, but he had served previously as Acting Deputy Commissioner of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and in the U.S. Marine Corps. In May 2019, James M. Murray was appointed as Secret Service Director. Director Murray had served from within the Secret Service supervising at multiple levels of the organization. However, as we reported in 2019, the Secret Service Director is appointed through presidential action, as the Secret Service does not select its own Director.
19. Establish a leadership development system that identifies and trains the agency's future managers and leaders.	Implemented ^c	As of November 2021, the Secret Service had finalized and implemented its Leadership Development System framework across all occupational categories in the agency – APT, special agent, Technical Law Enforcement, and Uniformed Division. According to the Secret Service, the framework is intended to promote leadership within individuals, teams, and projects and result in a positive effect on performance and agency mission accomplishment. In addition, the framework is aligned to related initiatives, such as the agency's Merit Promotion Processes, Career Progression Plans, and Performance Management initiatives.

Legend: ✓=Implemented (ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation); ¼ = Implementation in progress

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Secret Service information. | GAO-22-105100

^aIn our May 2019 report, we noted that the Secret Service does not have a documented process for collecting complete and appropriate Uniformed Division training data that the agency can use to determine whether officers trained for 10 percent of their work hours. In our report, we recommended that the Secret Service develop and implement a policy that documents the process for collecting complete Uniformed Division officer training data and establishes the types of information that should be collected. See GAO, U.S. Secret Service: Further Actions Needed to Fully Address Protective Mission Panel Recommendations, [GAO-19-415](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 22, 2019).

The Secret Service concurred with our recommendation but has not yet fully addressed it.

^bThe Emergency Action and Building Defense course is a component of new Uniformed Division recruits' training. Topics addressed in the course include judgment, firearm control, constitutional law, and emergency medicine. The Secret Service began offering Emergency Action and Building Defense training to Uniformed Division personnel in October 2014.

^cThis recommendation has been implemented since our May 2019 report. See [GAO-19-415](#).

^dAccording to its policy, the Secret Service is to use a five-phase resource allocation cycle to annually (1) assess and identify current and future operational and administrative requirements and capabilities; (2) assign financial and human resources to the requirements and capabilities; (3) prepare budget submissions to DHS, OMB, and Congress; (4) execute the programs and initiatives that are to deliver the identified requirements and capabilities; and (5) evaluate and reassess the need, efficiency, and effectiveness of the programs and initiatives used to accomplish the agency's mission. See U.S. Secret Service, *Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, Evaluation (PPBEE)*, COO-01 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 21, 2019).

As table 1 illustrates, the Secret Service has made further progress in implementing the Panel's 19 recommendations by addressing the following recommendations since our 2019 report.

- **Panel Recommendation 10:** The Panel recommended that the Secret Service present a zero-based or mission-based budget and that it begin immediately by working within DHS to adopt a workforce staffing model.¹³ The Secret Service has revised its budget processes to formally incorporate the principles of mission-based budgeting in its budget formulation process. For example, in February 2019, the Secret Service added a Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, and Evaluation cycle into its new policy for its budgeting process.¹⁴ The new policy also tasks the Secret Service's internal decision-making entities (e.g., the Enterprise Governance Council and its four Common Appropriations Structure committees) with reviewing and prioritizing proposals for information technology, science and

¹³Under mission-based budgeting, also known as zero-based budgeting, the agency is to rebuild the budget by clearly defining its mission and desired outcomes and determining what funding level is needed to obtain those outcomes. This process is in contrast to making incremental changes from the prior year's budget.

¹⁴See U.S. Secret Service, *Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, Evaluation (PPBEE)*, COO-01. Specifically, under its established policy, the Secret Service is to annually (1) assess and identify current and future operational and administrative requirements and capabilities; (2) assign financial and human resources to the requirements and capabilities; (3) prepare budget submissions to DHS, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Congress; (4) execute the programs and initiatives that deliver the requirements and capabilities; and (5) evaluate and reassess the need, efficiency, and effectiveness of the programs and initiatives used to accomplish the Secret Service's mission.

technology, human resources, and other capital assets investments.¹⁵ According to Secret Service officials, these new planning and programming processes have helped the agency to identify the risks that may occur if resources are not available to support the agency's goals and priorities. Officials further noted that the processes enable the agency's components to better identify and justify their needs, requirements, and capabilities related to their protective and investigative missions.¹⁶ These officials also stated that the new policy has been very helpful in capturing costs, especially in regard to staffing, and in improving the agency's staffing models.

In addition, in August 2021, the agency released its new *Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*. The plan includes updated, mission-based staffing targets and was produced using three new staffing allocation models for all workforce categories, including special agents and Uniformed Division officers. Specifically, the strategic plan sets a target of having 9,005 employees by 2025 by increasing the Secret Service's workforce by 300 personnel per year for fiscal years 2023 through 2025.

- **Panel Recommendation 19:** The Panel recommended that the Secret Service establish a leadership development system that identifies and trains the agency's future managers and leaders. As of November 2021, the Secret Service had finalized and implemented its Leadership Development System framework across all occupational categories in the agency. In addition, Secret Service officials reported that the framework is aligned to related initiatives, such as the agency's Merit Promotion Processes, Career Progression Plans, and Mentoring, as well as its Leadership Coaching, Succession Management, and Performance Management initiatives.

¹⁵The Enterprise Governance Council is composed of deputy assistant directors from several Secret Service offices and is responsible for overseeing the agency's investments in science and technology, information technology, and other capital assets and making recommendations to Secret Service leadership on these investments. The Secret Service created the Common Appropriations Structure committees in January 2019. The committees include the Protective Operations Committee, Field Operations Committee, Training and Development Committee, and Mission Support Committees. These committees are responsible for reviewing and recommending to the Enterprise Governance Council on investment and other proposals related to their respective portfolios.

¹⁶The Secret Service is composed of 11 directorates, such as the Office of Protective Operations, Office of Investigations, and the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support.

For the six recommendations that remain unimplemented, the Secret Service has taken some steps toward implementing them, or reported additional actions underway. For example, the Panel's first recommendation was that the Secret Service provide a true "Fourth Shift" for training special agents assigned to PPD and VPD, so that they spend 2 weeks out of every 8 in training (i.e., 25 percent of work hours) and ensure that Uniformed Division officers are in training for no less than 10 percent of their time. The Secret Service has increased training and established a new training goal that special agents are to meet by fiscal year 2025. Similarly, the Panel's third recommendation was that Secret Service special agents and Uniformed Division officers train in conditions that replicate the physical environment in which they will operate. To do so, the Secret Service received approval in 2017 to build a White House Mockup Training Facility, but funding has yet to be allotted for the project. Secret Service officials stated that construction of the White House Mockup Training Facility will proceed when funding is available. As another example, the Panel's seventh recommendation was that the Secret Service replace the outer fence that surrounds the 18 acres of the White House complex to give Secret Service personnel more time to react to intrusions. In June 2019, the Secret Service began construction on the new White House fence. As of November 2021, Secret Service officials stated that three of eight fence sections, accounting for 54 percent of Phase I construction, are complete. The Secret Service estimates that it will complete Phase I construction of the new fence by March 2023.

Agency Comments

We provided a copy of this report to DHS. On review of our draft report, DHS informed us it had no comment, but provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, and the Secretary of Homeland Security. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or GoodwinG@gao.gov. Contact points for our Office 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 II.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gretta L. Goodwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G".

Gretta L. Goodwin
Director
Homeland Security and Justice

List of Committees

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Chairman
The Honorable Robert Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman
The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

The Honorable Chris Murphy
Chairman
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chair
The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
House of Representatives
The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Chairwoman
The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations

Letter

House of Representatives

Appendix I: U.S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel Recommendations and Status of Implementation, as of November 2021

In October 2014, the Secretary of Homeland Security established the U. S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel (Panel) and tasked the independent panel to review the security incident that occurred at the White House on September 19, 2014, as well as related security issues. The Panel made 19 public recommendations—as well as additional classified recommendations—to the U.S. Secret Service in three areas: (1) training and personnel; (2) technology, perimeter security, and operations; and (3) leadership. In this appendix, we list the 19 recommendations and accompanying text, as published in the *Report from the United States Secret Service Protective Mission Panel to the Secretary of Homeland Security*, dated December 15, 2014.

The Secret Service Overtime Pay Extension Act includes a provision for us to report on the extent of progress made by the Secret Service in implementing the recommendations of the 2014 Protective Mission Panel.¹ Specifically, for each recommendation, we provide our assessment of the Secret Service’s progress in implementing them. For those recommendations that we found were implemented in our 2019 report, we reassessed the Secret Service’s implementation efforts to ensure that they had maintained implementation. For all recommendations, we describe some of the actions the Secret Service has taken to implement the recommendations, and we identify the actions the agency said it plans to complete.

Panel Recommendation 1: Provide a true “Fourth Shift” for training the Presidential Protective Division (PPD) and Vice-Presidential Protective Division (VPD), so that they spend 2 weeks out of every 8 (i.e., 25

¹See Pub. L. No. 116-269, § 4, 134 Stat. 3323-3324 (2020).

**Appendix I: U.S. Secret Service Protective
Mission Panel Recommendations and Status
of Implementation, as of November 2021**

percent of work hours) in training, and ensure that Uniformed Division officers are in training for no less than 10 percent of their time.

According to the Panel, “Only with constant training can all of the teams at the White House perform the coordinated actions needed to effectively respond.”

Status: Implementation in progress

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service instituted a fourth and fifth shift for its PPD and a fourth shift for its VPD. The fourth shift for each division was to provide time for agents to participate in training and educational opportunities and take leave. The Secret Service, however, determined in 2021 that, given the availability of resources, it would set its PPD and VPD special agents' training hours target to be at least 12 percent by fiscal year 2025. Our analysis of Secret Service training data shows that special agents have increased their percentage of training hours since fiscal year 2014 from 3.3 percent of regular work hours to between 5.7 and 7.5 percent between fiscal years 2015 through 2020. In fiscal year 2014 VPD special agents trained 1.9 percent of regular work hours, with their percentage of training hours varying between 1.2 and 2.9 percent between fiscal years 2015 through 2020.

Regarding Uniformed Division officers, specifically, the Secret Service told us that these officers spent an average of 7.1 percent of their work hours in training in fiscal years 2019 through 2020. We were unable to confirm this information because the Secret Service has not fully implemented its policies for capturing data on Uniformed Division officer training, as we recommended in 2019.

Details

- The Secret Service instituted a fourth and fifth shift for PPD and a fourth shift for VPD in response to the Panel's recommendation. The fourth shift was created to provide time for special agents to participate in training and educational opportunities, conduct advance work (e.g., securing a site in advance of a visit by a protectee), and take leave. According to Secret Service officials, as of October 2021, the fourth and fifth shifts remain in place.
- In 2019, we found that the Secret Service had not met the Panel's recommended training targets for special agents assigned to PPD and VPD and lacked a plan for achieving them.² We, therefore, recommended that the Director of the Secret Service develop and

²In May 2019, the Secret Service stated that it no longer agreed with the 25 percent training target for PPD and VPD and planned to reevaluate it. See GAO, *U.S. Secret Service: Further Actions Needed to Fully Address Protective Mission Panel Recommendations*, [GAO-19-415](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 22, 2019).

implement a plan to ensure that special agents assigned to PPD and VPD reach annual training targets, given current and planned staffing levels. The agency concurred with our recommendation but planned to evaluate the training metric and develop a plan focusing on increasing capacity at training facilities, achieving staffing growth, and creating efficiencies in protective division scheduling.

Since that time, Secret Service officials reported in 2021 that, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) officials, the agency had reevaluated the Panel's recommendation that PPD and VPD special agents spend 25 percent of their regular work hours in training.³ According to Secret Service officials, the revised training goal, given the availability of resources, is for PPD and VPD agents to spend at least 12 percent of their regular work hours in training by fiscal year 2025 instead of the Panel's recommendation of 25 percent.⁴ The Secret Service's plan for meeting the newly established training goal by 2025 is to increase staff availability for training by increasing hiring and reducing attrition. However, the Secret Service has not identified how special agents assigned to PPD and VPD are to meet the newly developed 12 percent training target, and has not established interim achievable training targets, given current staffing levels. Our recommendation, therefore, remains unimplemented.

- According to our analysis of Secret Service Monthly Activity Reporting System data, PPD increased since fiscal year 2014. Specifically, the share of work hours that special agents in PPD spent on training increased from 3.3 percent of regular work hours in fiscal year 2014 to 7.4 percent in fiscal year 2019. For fiscal year 2020, the share of such

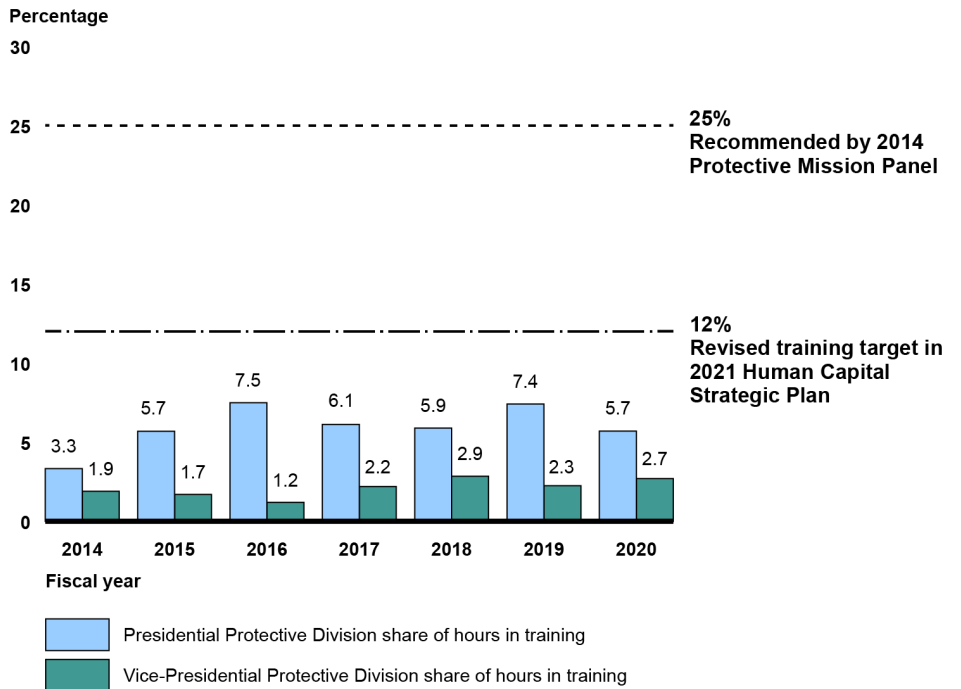
³The Secret Service identified the resources it requires to achieve its integrated mission for fiscal years 2021 through 2025, including the appropriate level of training hours that special agent and Uniformed Division officers should achieve, in its *Fiscal Years 2021 – 2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*. According to the plan, a number of factors were considered when evaluating the Secret Service's training requirements, including shift requirements for each protective detail or division, as well as the total number of hours that special agents and Uniformed Division officers must work to ensure that the Secret Service achieves its integrated mission. See U.S. Secret Service, *Fiscal Years 2021 – 2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan* (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 4, 2021)

⁴Secret Service officials stated that the agency expects to gradually increase PPD and VPD training to 29.4 percent of regular work hours by fiscal year 2030. The officials further stated that these training hours are also to include time spent in physical fitness training after fiscal year 2025. Presently, physical fitness training hours, are not included when determining special agents' training hours.

Appendix I: U.S. Secret Service Protective Mission Panel Recommendations and Status of Implementation, as of November 2021

work hours decreased to 5.7 percent (see fig. 2). Secret Service officials noted that this decrease occurred because the agency halted all training from March to June 2020 in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and also because the volume of protection requirements increased because of the 2020 presidential campaign. Regarding special agents assigned to VPD, in fiscal year 2014 VPD special agents trained 1.9 percent of regular work hours. Since then, between fiscal years 2015 through 2020 their percentage of training hours varied from between 1.2 percent of regular work hours to 2.9 percent (see fig. 2).⁵

Figure 2: Share of Regular Work Hours That Presidential Protective Division and Vice-Presidential Protective Detail Special Agents Spent in Training, Fiscal Years 2014 through 2020



Source: GAO analysis of Secret Service data. | GAO-22-105100

⁵Secret Service officials noted that VPD personnel had begun training on a new service firearm prior to the pandemic, which increased the amount of time spent in training for VPD special agents.

Data table for Figure 2: Share of Regular Work Hours That Presidential Protective Division and Vice-Presidential Protective Detail Special Agents Spent in Training, Fiscal Years 2014 through 2020

Year	Presidential Protective Division share of hours in training	Vice Presidential Protective Division share of hours in training
2014"	3.33	1.9
2015"	5.69	1.7
2016"	7.49	1.2
2017"	6.12	2.2
2018"	5.89	2.85
2019"	7.41	2.25
2020"	5.7	2.7

GAO analysis of secret service data. | GAO-22-105100

- Regarding the Panel’s recommendation that Uniformed Division officers spend 10 percent of their work hours in training, the Secret Service reported that these officers spent an average of 7.1 percent of their work hours in training from fiscal years 2019 through 2020. However, we were unable to confirm this information because the Secret Service has not fully implemented its policies for capturing data on Uniformed Division officer training, as we recommended in 2019.

In 2019, we recommended, and the Secret Service concurred, that the Secret Service should develop and implement a policy that documents the process for collecting complete Uniformed Division officer training data. Our recommendation continued that the Secret Service should establish the types of information that should be collected.⁶ In 2021, Secret Service officials identified steps they had taken to improve collection of Uniformed Division training data, including drafting policies they said would document the agency’s process for collecting complete and appropriate Uniformed Division training data. For example, in September 2021, the Secret Service finalized its policy related to collecting and reporting information about on-the-job training for these officers. Secret Service officials stated that the new policy mandates the collection of Uniformed Division officer training data into the Secret Service’s Learning Management System. However, as of November 2021, the Secret Service had not yet completed its internal review and approval of the two related

⁶GAO-19-415.

policies, which officials told us were intended to ensure that all Uniformed Division training data are collected.⁷ According to agency officials, the agency does not have an anticipated completion date for the policies.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: The Secret Service will monitor compliance with its new policy and also work to finalize other draft policies related to Uniformed Division training.

Panel Recommendation 2: Implement integrated training focused on ensuring that all teams at the White House know their roles in responding to specific threats.

According to the Panel, “Teams need to train with the full complement of forces with which they will operate in real life, and the training needs to be provided force-wide, not just to those on duty on the day that training is scheduled.”

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service reported that it had conducted 218 drills from 2019 through June 2021. Secret Service officials said that it conducts drills, exercises, and scenarios across personnel units. In addition, the Secret Service continues to offer its Emergency Action and Building Defense training to Uniformed Division personnel and Secret Service special teams, such as countersniper units.

Details

- About once per month, the Secret Service conducts integrated drills and training scenarios, with special agents assigned to PPD and VPD, and Uniformed Division officers. Secret Service officials noted that these scenarios involve real-world practical exercises for the officers and Secret Service special teams, such as canine units. The Secret Service also noted that training for PPD and VPD focuses on

⁷The policies that Secret Service officials told us they were working to finalize and issue were for the Uniformed Division Field Training Program and the Uniformed Division In-Service Training Program.

responses to threats such as motorcade scenarios, attacks on protectees, and emergency medical response.

- The Secret Service also noted that it conducts drills and discussion-based exercises with participating law enforcement partners. For example, during preparations for National Special Security Events, personnel from DHS's Transportation Security Administration, including the Federal Air Marshal Service, coordinated with Secret Service personnel to test their responses to various scenarios.
- Consistent with our reporting in 2019, the Secret Service told us that they continue to offer their Emergency Action and Building Defense training to Uniformed Division officers and Secret Service special teams, such as countersniper and canine teams.
- The Secret Service conducted joint training exercises with local, state, federal, and foreign tactical units. According to Secret Service officials, the agency conducted 218 of these joint training exercises in fiscal years 2015 through 2021.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: None

Panel Recommendation 3: Train in conditions that replicate the physical environment in which they will operate.

According to the Panel, “A security team should also be trained so that it is intimately familiar with the space in which it is operating.”

Status: Implementation in progress

Summary: To train in conditions that replicate the White House, the Secret Service secured approval in 2017 to build a White House Mockup Training Facility at the James J. Rowley Training Center in Beltsville, Maryland. According to Secret Service officials, DHS has not yet allotted funding for the project.

Details:

- In 2017, the National Capital Planning Commission approved the Secret Service’s revised master plan for the Rowley Training Center, which includes the White House Mockup Training Facility.
- In fiscal year 2019, the Secret Service estimated in its Resource Allocation Plan that the construction would cost approximately \$77.4 million for the 5-year project. According to Secret Service officials, they have made multiple requests to DHS to allot funding for the project, but DHS has not yet done so.⁸
- In June 2021, Secret Service officials stated that they plan to conduct an updated feasibility study to construct the White House Mock Training Facility because the feasibility study that the Secret Service originally completed in 2016 is becoming out of date. Officials also stated that the update is needed to reflect the Secret Service’s current operational requirements and building costs. Secret Service officials told us that the agency had assigned a Senior Executive Service Candidate to manage the development and launch of the new feasibility study. This includes identifying the goals, objects, phases, and potential funding necessary to complete the Mock White House Training Facility. The Secret Service reported that the feasibility study

⁸An allotment is part of an agency system of administrative control of funds whose purpose is to prevent an agency’s obligations or expenditures from exceeding the amounts available to the agency. GAO, *A Glossary of Terms Used in the Federal Budget Process*, [GAO-05-734SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 2005), 10-11.

is expected to commence in early 2022 and be completed by January 2023.

- According to Secret Service officials, some special agent and Uniformed Division officer training takes place in the operating environment. As previously noted, the Secret Service reported that between January 2019 and June 2021, it conducted 218 drills at the White House and the Naval Observatory in order to train within its existing physical environment.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: Secret Service officials stated that the agency will proceed with construction of the White House Mockup Training Facility when funding is available.

Panel Recommendation 4: Increase the Uniformed Division, as quickly as can be appropriately managed, by an initial 200 persons, and the Presidential Protective Division by 85 positions. Perform additional analyses and, likely, make further increases, as necessary.

According to the Panel, “Both the Uniformed Division and the Presidential Protective Division are currently stretched beyond their limits.”

Status: Implemented, ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions Taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service increased the number of Uniformed Division officers by 316 officers between fiscal year 2014 and July 2021. In addition, the Secret Service increased the number of special agents assigned to PPD by 165 during the same time period. The Secret Service’s *Fiscal Years 2021– 2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan* sets a target for the agency to have 4,474 special agents and 1,805 Uniformed Division officers in fiscal year 2025.

Details:

- From fiscal year 2014 to July 2021, the Secret Service increased the number of Uniformed Division officers by 316 officers. Similarly, the number of special agents assigned to PPD increased by 164 special agents during the same time period.
- In August 2021, the Secret Service issued its *Fiscal Years 2021– 2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*. The plan includes updated,

mission-based staffing targets produced by new staffing allocation models for all workforce categories, including special agents assigned to PPD and VPD. According to the plan, the Secret Service has set its staffing targets to increase over the next 5 fiscal years. Specifically, the agency's total staff is to increase from 7,896 in 2021 to 9,005 by the end of fiscal year 2025.⁹ Within these targets, the plan also details targets for special agents and Uniformed Division officers for fiscal years 2021 through 2025. For example, the plan sets a target of 4,474 special agents and 1,805 Uniformed Division officers for fiscal year 2025.

According to our review of Secret Service staffing levels, between fiscal years 2017 and 2020, the Secret Service fell short of achieving their planned staffing levels by 275 individuals—190 special agents and 85 Uniformed Division officers. Moreover, the Secret Service did not achieve their planned staffing levels for 3 of these 4 years. The Secret Service stated that the projected target of 9,005 employees is viewed as a realistic and achievable first step toward restoring full mission strength, readiness, and capability. Secret Service officials noted, however, that the majority of the agency's recruitment and hiring efforts were negatively affected in fiscal year 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, agency officials stated that most applicants who were required to undergo further medical appointments to be cleared for hire had difficulties scheduling a nonemergency appointment, due to pandemic-related restrictions.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: The Secret Service plans to utilize targeted hiring efforts to generate sufficient applicants, work to improve its time-to-hire process, and implement retention programs.

Panel Recommendation 5: Reform and professionalize recruiting, hiring, promotion, and a rotation process that puts the most talented, capable individuals in place as efficiently as possible.

According to the Panel, "The Secret Service must continue efforts to develop a professionalized recruiting and hiring process that finds talented individuals, evaluates candidates rigorously for the Presidential Protective Division, and hires them quickly."

⁹To achieve these targets, the plan calls for staffing levels to increase by 119 in Fiscal Years 2021, 209 in fiscal year 2022, and 300 staff each year for the remaining 3 fiscal years.

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: In 2019, Secret Service officials reported actions intended to strengthen recruiting and to clarify the promotion process, such as issuing a new Merit Promotion Process for Uniformed Division officers. In July 2021, Secret Service officials told us that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected its initiatives to reduce hiring time for special agents and Uniformed Division officers. Secret Service officials told us they have maintained the efforts we reported in 2019 to reform and professionalize its recruiting, hiring, promotion, and rotation processes. For example, the Secret Service's Chief Human Capital Officer continues to run the agency's Office of Human Resources and is a professional administrator. Secret Service officials stated that they have completed new actions that aim to strengthen recruiting and clarify the promotion process, such as issuing a new Merit Promotion Process for Uniformed Division officers.

Details:

- Secret Service officials report they have maintained the efforts we reported in 2019 to reform and professionalize its recruiting, hiring, promotion, and rotation processes. For example, the Office of Human Resources remains a stand-alone directorate that is run by the Secret Service's Chief Human Capital Officer, who is a professional administrator.¹⁰
- Secret Service officials stated that the agency hired a Recruitment Program Manager to serve as an expert on recruitment issues in February 2018. They also reported contracting with a marketing and advertising firm with law enforcement recruiting experience to improve

¹⁰To implement the Panel's fifth recommendation, in 2019, we reported that the Secret Service had reorganized the Office of Human Resources as a stand-alone directorate and had hired a Chief Human Capital Officer who was a professional administrator. We also reported that the agency had (1) developed a National Recruitment Strategy for fiscal years 2016 through 2020 and the Recruitment and Outreach Plan for fiscal year 2018; (2) developed a number of hiring initiatives intended to reduce time-to-hire for special agents and Uniformed Division officers; and (3) published special agent Career Progression guidelines and a revised Merit Promotion Process for special agents in May 2017. In 2019, agency officials also told us that they planned to (1) complete a revised Uniformed Division Merit Promotion Process; (2) implement the Administrative, Professional, and Technical (APT) Career Progression Plan; and (3) update and consolidate internal policies for special agent and Uniformed Division officer recruitment and hiring.

the agency's outreach efforts, using technology to target its recruitment efforts toward specific segments of the population and to ensure that the agency attracts a diverse applicant pool.¹¹

- Secret Service officials report that the agency completed its revisions to the Uniformed Division Merit Promotion Process and implemented it in 2019. According to the Secret Service, the new process is intended to be a fair, transparent, and legally defensible means of identifying candidates with the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful if promoted to the Uniformed Division sergeant, lieutenant, and captain positions. To develop the new merit process, the Secret Service conducted a benchmark and best practices study of law enforcement organizations' promotion processes. The agency completed the study in June 2018 to align the Secret Service's Uniformed Division Merit Promotion Process with known best practices related to law enforcement promotion.¹²
- Secret Service officials also reported completing the development of the agency's Administrative, Professional, and Technical (APT) Career Progression Plan in June 2021. Secret Service documents state that the APT Career Progression Plan is a structured, competency-based, professional development program intended to promote individual career growth based on critical competencies identified as necessary for staff to perform their duties within each of the 17 APT job families in the Secret Service.¹³
- The Secret Service reported that the hiring initiatives it developed had reduced time-to-hire for special agents and Uniformed Division officers from an average of 395 days in fiscal year 2016 to 285 days in

¹¹According to the Secret Service, its recruitment efforts also are targeted toward active and retired military personnel, persons with disabilities, African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian-Americans, and members of the LGBTQ community.

¹²To conduct the benchmarking study, the agency interviewed nine local and county law enforcement organizations and sought input from subject matter experts within the Uniformed Division. To conduct this study, the agency specifically selected law enforcement agencies that employ an assessment center as part of their process. According to the Secret Service, Uniformed Division subject matter experts were selected because they had served as raters in other law enforcement agencies or had participated in the Secret Service's Uniformed Division promotion process.

¹³The APT job families are Business and Industry; Engineering and Architecture; Equipment and Emergency Management; General Administration; Human Resources Management; Information Technology Management; Inspection, Investigation, Enforcement and Compliance Series; Library and Archives; Mathematics; Media and Information; Medical, Hospital, Dental and Public Health Series; Miscellaneous Occupation Series; Physical Sciences; Security Administration; Social Science, Psychology, Protective Intelligence & Welfare; Supply; and Training.

fiscal year 2018. The average time-to-hire for special agents fell to 228 days and to 231 days for Uniformed Division officers in fiscal year 2019. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the average days to hire for special agents was down to 137 days and to 162 days for Uniformed Division officers in the 1st quarter of fiscal year 2020. However, according to the Secret Service, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the majority of Secret Service hiring stages, including entrance exams, interviews, polygraph exams, medical exams, and drug tests. For example, agency officials stated that most applicants who were required to undergo further medical appointments to be cleared for hire had difficulties scheduling a nonemergency appointment, due to pandemic-related restrictions. As a result, as of November 2021, the average number of days to hire a special agent rose to 391 days and 286 days to hire a Uniformed Division candidate for Fiscal Year 2021.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: Secret Service officials also reported that they plan to take the following additional actions:

- As of November 2021, Secret Service officials reported that they are in the final stages of completing revisions to policies related to its Uniformed Division Merit Promotion Plan for the 2023-to-2025 fiscal year promotion cycle.¹⁴ Officials expect to complete these processes by the end of fiscal year 2022.
- Secret Service officials reported that, in 2020, the Secret Service began to review and update the evaluative factors (eFactors), which are used in making special agent promotions to positions at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels.¹⁵ Agency officials also stated that the goal of this effort is to account for any changes in the position requirements since these eFactors were developed in 2017.
- Secret Service officials stated that they planned to refresh existing job analyses for special agent and Uniformed Division officer positions by the end of fiscal year 2022.

¹⁴According to the Secret Service, Uniformed Division promotion cycles are done in 2 to 3-year intervals. The current Uniformed Division Promotion Plan cycle is for fiscal years 2021 through 2023, and the next cycle will be fiscal years 2023 through 2025.

¹⁵According to the Secret Service, eFactors are predetermined, job-related factors that provide selection officials with a standardized and fair means of selecting the right candidates for these mission-critical leadership positions.

Panel Recommendation 6: The Secret Service must do more to ensure that its Office of Technical Development and Mission Support proactively reviews and refreshes its technological footprint. The Secret Service should continue to receive dedicated funds for technology, both within its own budget and within DHS’s Science and Technology’s budget, to accomplish these tasks.

According to the Panel, “Technology systems used on the White House complex must always remain on the cutting edge, and the Secret Service must invest in technology, including becoming a driver of research and development that may assist in its mission.”

Status: Implementation in progress.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: To address current technical capabilities and future needs, Secret Service officials reported completing, but not finalizing, a draft of the *Fiscal Years 2021–2026 Strategic Implementation Plan for Protective Technologies*. Agency officials stated in 2019 that they planned to finalize and execute this plan as one of the actions to implement this recommendation. However, in September 2021, agency officials reported that they have not finalized the strategy because it is in a pilot phase; they provided no estimate for when the pilot will end.

Details:

- Secret Service officials reported that the Secret Service’s Office of Technical Development and Mission Support coordinates with several bodies that determine how to prioritize the agency’s technology investments, including the Enterprise Governance Council, as well as its Protection-related Common Appropriations Structure Committee and its Science and Technology Review Committee.¹⁶ Both of these committees meet to discuss the agency’s protective-related technological needs or to analyze and prioritize related investment decisions. According to agency officials, these bodies play an integral role in internal funding decisions and work to ensure that proper

¹⁶In 2019, we reported that the Science and Technology Committee met quarterly to discuss protection-related technology requirements. The committee is chaired by the Chief Technology Officer, overseen by the Enterprise Governance Council, and open to representatives from all Secret Service directorates. See [GAO-19-415](#).

resources are provided to support the agency's technological footprint.

- Secret Service officials stated that every fiscal year, the agency examines threats that may have evolved and determines whether these threats can be addressed using existing or new technology. The officials also stated that they quantify sustainment costs and any deferred maintenance necessary to support technology in the near term, identify relevant replacement investment cycles and work to ensure their inclusion in the budget formulation process, and have developed metrics for evaluating the performance of deployed technology.
- We reported in 2019 that the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support was drafting a 5-year strategic investment plan. As of August 2021, the Secret Service has drafted, but not finalized, its *Fiscal Years 2021 – 2026 Strategic Implementation Plan for Protective Technologies*. Finalizing and executing this plan was one of the actions agency officials reported in 2019 that they planned to take to implement this recommendation. The directorate has also drafted, but not finalized, two directives detailing how the agency's Office of Technical Development and Mission Support is to implement the strategies' objectives related to the strategic prioritization framework described in the plan. These documents were created in response to a directive in 2018 by the Director of the Secret Service to develop a strategic plan for the engineering, scientific, and physical security technology that will be necessary to support future Secret Service protective operations.
- According to agency officials, the Secret Service works with DHS's Science and Technology Directorate, partner agencies, and external stakeholders on technological issues. For example, the Science and Technology Directorate develops pilot programs based on the Secret Service's technical requirements. In addition, Secret Service officials reported meeting with DHS Science and Technology Directorate officials at least on a weekly basis to coordinate funding strategy and execution related to the Secret Service's research and development needs. As a result, DHS has allocated approximately \$20 million annually for the Secret Service's research and development needs within DHS's Science and Technology budget. Office of Technical Development and Mission Support officials reported using these funds to implement technology improvements at the White House and the Vice President's residence, including adding technologies to counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems, refreshing video surveillance systems, adding new sensors to improve intrusion detection, and making

infrastructure improvements to allow for future security enhancements.

Additional actions the Secret Service plans to take: Secret Service officials reported that they plan to continue the pilot phase for the Strategic Implementation Plan for Protective Technologies and associated directives.

Panel Recommendation 7: Replace the outer fence that surrounds the 18 acres of the White House complex to give Secret Service personnel more time to react to intrusions.

According to the Panel, “The current seven-and-a-half-foot fence, not just along Pennsylvania Avenue but around the compound’s entire perimeter, must be replaced as quickly as possible.”

Status: Implementation in progress.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service reported that construction began on the new White House fence in July 2019. As of November 2021, Secret Service officials stated that three of eight fence sections, accounting for 54 percent of Phase I construction, are complete. The Secret Service had reported in May 2021 that it planned to complete Phase I construction by October 2022. However, officials stated that construction has been delayed due to (1) events held on the White House south grounds; (2) unanticipated events, such as protests; and (3) unforeseen site conditions, such as the discovery of underground power lines. The Secret Service estimates that it will complete Phase I construction of the new fence by March 2023.

Details:

- The Secret Service reports that construction began on the new White House fence in July 2019.
- As of November 2021, the Secret Service reported that the first three of eight fence sections, accounting for 54 percent of construction, had been completed.

- The Secret Service and the National Park Service have revised project milestones, due to construction delays.¹⁷ Agency officials report that construction has been delayed due to three factors (1) events held on the White House south grounds; (2) unanticipated events, such as protests; and (3) unforeseen site conditions, such as the discovery of power lines, lead paint, and old foundation walls that must be surveyed for archeological purposes.¹⁸
- The Secret Service planned to complete construction of Phase I by October 2022 but now estimates a completion date of March 2023. The Secret Service reported that the Phase II process of design, review, approval meetings, and construction is expected to begin after Phase I construction is completed in fiscal year 2023.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: Secret Service officials reported that the agency plans to direct engineers to work with the Office of Protective Operations to identify interim measures for improving the security of the White House complex that are not addressed by the Phase I fence construction.

Panel Recommendation 8: The Secret Service needs to clearly communicate agency priorities, give effect to those priorities through its actions, and align its operations with its priorities.

According to the Panel, “Secret Service’s leadership must make those choices in a manner to ensure that its core protective mission remains first priority.”

Status: Implementation in progress.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service issued its 5-year strategic plan in 2018 and its *Fiscal Years 2021– 2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan* in 2021, among other planning documents. In these documents, the agency communicated its priorities. The Human Capital Strategic Plan, for

¹⁷In 2019, we reported that Phase II was to expand the new fence to the Treasury Building and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

¹⁸According to Secret Service officials, stone rubble foundations were discovered below the south fence line. The officials stated that the National Park Service required that these foundations be surveyed. Stones foundations were removed at locations where it was necessary to allow for the installation of the new fence. At National Park Service direction, any stones with markings and carvings were to be salvaged and stored.

example, is intended to address how the agency's projected resources can support staffing levels to fulfill the Secret Service's priorities for its integrated mission. The plan includes updated, mission-based staffing targets for all workforce categories, including special agents. The Secret Service has also continued to communicate its priorities by maintaining the efforts we reported in 2019 to oversee internal and external communication. However, the Secret Service has not fully aligned its operations with its priorities. This is because, for example, the agency has not significantly increased the number of training hours completed by its special agents. In addition, from fiscal years 2017 through 2020, Secret Service staffing levels fell short of its planned staffing levels for 3 of these 4 fiscal years by 275 individuals (190 special agents and 85 Uniformed Division officers).

Details:

- To implement this recommendation, the Secret Service sought to improve internal and external communication efforts. The agency did so by hiring a senior Executive Director of Communications in 2016 and forming the Office of Communications and Media Relations in 2017 to manage the agency's public affairs efforts and oversee internal agency communication. In addition, in October 2015, the Secret Service developed an internal agency communication platform known as Spark!. The Spark! platform allows all employees to share ideas and submit suggestions on how to improve the agency's performance and efficiency, thereby improving communication within the agency. For example, Secret Service officials reported that 82 Spark! submissions were received in fiscal year 2020, and six of these were implemented. An example of a submission that the agency incorporated includes allowing Uniformed Division officers to work rotating shifts.
- Secret Service officials also reported additional actions since 2019 to implement this recommendation, such as developing and issuing supervisor toolkits, which are intended to assist mid- and upper-level management with effectively communicating agency priorities, initiatives, and strategies to their personnel.¹⁹
- The Secret Service issued its 5-year strategic plan in 2018 and its *Fiscal Years 2021 –2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan* in August 2021. Reviewed and approved by DHS and OMB prior to its issuance,

¹⁹According to Secret Service officials, these toolkits include summaries of agency initiatives, top-line messaging for employees, and Q&As.

the *Human Capital Strategic Plan* is intended to address how the agency's projected resources can support staffing levels to fulfill the Secret Service's integrated mission. The strategic plan includes updated, mission-based staffing targets produced by new staffing allocation models for all workforce categories, including special agents and Uniformed Division officers. Specifically, the strategic plan sets a target of 9,005 employees by 2025 by increasing the Secret Service's workforce by 300 personnel per year in fiscal years 2023 through 2025.²⁰ The plan's staffing model assumes that special agents and Uniformed Division officers would train an estimated 12 percent of their work hours, and certain specialized units would train more.²¹ In addition, the *Human Capital Strategic Plan* has set retaining its employees as one of its five goals.²² According to the plan, the Secret Service acknowledges that it cannot rely solely on increased hiring to meet the agency's mission needs. Therefore, according to the plan, the Secret Service is also to focus on retaining personnel by enhancing the work-life balance of its employees, continuing existing retention programs, and monitoring and refining initiatives that will attract and retain Secret Service employees. For example, the Secret Service reported that its student loan and tuition assistance programs have helped to retain 534 employees.

- However, the Secret Service has not fully aligned its operations with its priorities. For example, as noted earlier, the Secret Service has not significantly increased the percent of regular work hours that PPD and VPD special agents spent in training. In addition, as noted earlier, the agency has set mission-based hiring targets to support its integrated mission. As shown in our discussion regarding the Panel's fourth recommendation, Secret Service staffing levels between fiscal years 2017 and 2020 fell short of planned staffing levels for 3 of these 4 fiscal years. Specifically, the Secret Service did not achieve its planned staffing levels by 275 individuals—190 special agents and 85 Uniformed Division officers.

²⁰The Secret Service's Fiscal Years 2021-2025 *Human Capital Strategic Plan* calls for an increase of 119 personnel in Fiscal Years 2021 and 209 personnel in fiscal year 2022.

²¹Special agents and Uniformed Division officers assigned to specialized units, such as K9 units or tactical operations, require higher levels of training. Therefore, for those units, the *Human Capital Strategic Plan* sets training hour targets at 30 percent to 37 percent.

²²The plan includes five goals: Goal 1. Hire to Achieve Mission-Based Staffing Targets; Goal 2. Engage and Retain Highly Skilled Employees; Goal 3. Provide Opportunities for Employee Professional Growth; Goal 4. Optimize the Use of Human Resources Information Technology; and Goal 5. Enhance Organizational Security.

Additional actions the Secret Service plans to take: None

Panel Recommendation 9: Promote specialized expertise in its budget, workforce, and technology functions

According to the Panel, “Filling important administrative functions with agents rather than professional administrators may not be optimal.”

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service has reorganized the agency to promote specialized expertise in certain functions. For example, in 2015, the Secret Service established the position of Chief Operating Officer to run the agency’s business functions. In addition, the Chief Operating Officer oversees several senior leadership positions drawn from outside of the Secret Service’s agent ranks. Secret Service officials report that the agency has also increased the number of non-special-agent professionals hired into positions for its mission support operations by 320 positions since fiscal year 2015.

Details:

- The Secret Service has reorganized the agency to promote specialized expertise in certain functions. In 2015, the Secret Service established the position of Chief Operating Officer. This principal administrator, who is equivalent in rank to the Deputy Director, directs the agency’s business and programmatic activities, with a focus on improving performance, hiring and retaining personnel, and aligning budgetary and strategic planning efforts. As of November 2021, the agency’s enterprise-business functions continue to be aligned under a Chief Operating Officer, who oversees several senior leadership positions drawn from outside the Secret Service’s special agent ranks.
- The Secret Service professionalized the leadership of several directorates by elevating or hiring civilian senior executives, instead of placing special agents in these specialized positions. For example, in 2015, the civilian who was serving as Chief Financial Officer was placed in charge of the newly created Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Similarly, the civilian who was serving as the Chief Information Officer was placed in charge of the newly created Office of the Chief Information Officer. Also, in 2015, the civilian Chief Technology Officer

was placed in charge of the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support, and the Secret Service hired a civilian from outside of the agency to become Chief Human Capital Officer—a position that was formerly held by a special agent. In 2015, the agency also created two additional senior civilian positions: Chief Strategy Officer and Director of Communications. The Secret Service also hired a new Deputy Chief Information Officer in April 2021.

- Secret Service officials also stated that the agency continues to hire non-special-agent professionals to lead specialized enterprise functions. For example, in 2019, the Secret Service established two non-special-agent executive-level positions at the Deputy Assistant Director level – one within the Office of Protective Operations and the other in the Office of Investigations – to provide strategy, management, and budget formulation and execution advice to operational executives. Furthermore, Secret Service officials reported that the agency has also increased the number of non-special-agent professionals hired into positions for its mission support operations by 320 positions. Specifically, the agency increased APT staffing from 1,724 in fiscal year 2015 to 2,044 in fiscal year 2020.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: None

Panel Recommendation 10: Present a zero-based or mission-based budget that will provide sufficient resources to accomplish its mission, beginning immediately by working within DHS to adopt a workforce staffing model.

According to the Panel, the Service must build a new budget from the ground up by defining its mission, determining what it will take to achieve it, and asking for that. The mission is important enough to justify that approach.

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service has revised its budget processes to incorporate the principles of mission-based budgeting in its budget formulation process. Under mission-based budgeting, the agency is to rebuild the budget by clearly defining its mission and desired outcomes and determining what funding level is needed to obtain those outcomes. This is in contrast to making incremental changes from the prior year's

budget. Specifically, the Secret Service formally incorporated the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, Evaluation cycle into its policy for its budgeting process in February 2019. In August 2021, the Secret Service also issued its *Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*, which includes revised staffing models.

Details:

- The Secret Service has revised its budget processes to incorporate principles of mission-based budgeting into its budget formulation process by incorporating the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, and Evaluation cycle into its formal policy for its budgeting process in February 2019.²³ Secret Service officials also reported that implementing and using the Secret Service’s new policy has been very helpful to capture costs, especially in regard to staffing, and were also helpful in improving staffing models. The officials explained that the agency has also made significant enhancements to track and detail the costs related to the overtime protective duties program, project, or activity. Specifically, the officials stated that the Office of the Chief Financial Officer tracked these costs throughout the full year and worked with the Office of Protective Operations to delineate the activities and identify a project, organization, expenditure type, and task structure. Doing so, the officials reported, allowed them to properly capture and report various costs, including COVID 19-related costs, such as testing and personal protective equipment.
- Secret Service officials also noted that implementing the new process provides a common framework for the agency to better identify the capabilities necessary to counter any new or evolving threats. According to agency officials, the planning and programming process helps the agency to identify the risk if resources are not available to support the agency’s goals and priorities. This is because, according to agency officials, through this process the agency’s components are able to justify their needs, requirements, and capabilities related to

²³Specifically, under its established policy, the Secret Service is to annually (1) assess and identify current and future operational and administrative requirements and capabilities; (2) assign financial and human resources to the requirements and capabilities; (3) prepare budget submissions to DHS, OMB, and Congress; (4) execute the programs and initiatives that deliver the requirements and capabilities; and (5) evaluate and reassess the need, efficiency, and effectiveness of the programs and initiatives used to accomplish the Secret Service’s mission. U. S. Secret Service, *Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Execution, and Evaluation (PPBEE)*, COO-01 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 21, 2019).

their protective and investigative mission.²⁴ These justifications, agency officials stated, are then also aligned with risk as part of the new process. In addition, the new process tasks the Secret Service's internal decision-making entities (e.g., the Enterprise Governance Council and its four Common Appropriations Structure committees) with reviewing and prioritizing proposals for information technology, science and technology, human resources, and other capital assets investments.²⁵

- Regarding the Secret Service's staffing models and its work with DHS to adopt a workforce staffing model, in January 2020, we found that the staffing model the Secret Service's Office of Investigations used to determine the number of special agents needed in its field offices did not take into account annual caps on federal employee salaries.²⁶ We recommended that the Secret Service revise its special agent staffing model to ensure that compensation limits are accounted for when estimating staffing needs. In March 2020, the Secret Service completed the calculation and analytical work to revise the special agent staffing model to account for compensation limits, in addition to other factors. As a result, we determined that these actions fully addressed the intent of our recommendation in August 2020.

²⁴The Secret Service is composed of 11 directorates, such as the Office of Protective Operations, Office of Investigations, and the Office of Technical Development and Mission Support.

²⁵The Enterprise Governance Council is composed of Deputy Assistant Directors from several Secret Service offices and is responsible for overseeing the agency's investments in science and technology, information technology, and other capital assets and making recommendations to Secret Service leadership on these investments. The Secret Service created the Common Appropriations Structure committees in January 2019. The committees include the Protective Operations Committee, Field Operations Committee, Training and Development Committee, and Mission Support Committee. These committees are responsible for reviewing and recommending to the Enterprise Governance Council on investment and other proposals related to their respective portfolios.

According to the Secret Service, capital assets are properties, plants, and equipment that are acquired and owned or leased at or above an entity-specific cost/dollar threshold and provided an economic benefit for 2 or more years. Examples of capital assets are buildings, structures, vehicles, leasehold improvements, or other improvements that extend the useful life of an asset.

²⁶In 2020, we reported that because the staffing model for the Office of Investigations did not take into annual account salary caps, some special agents worked some time without compensation, resulting in over \$1 million in lost wages. See GAO, *U.S. Secret Service: Investigative Operations Confer Benefits, but Additional Actions Are Needed to Prioritize Resources*, [GAO-20-239](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 22, 2020).

- Further, in August 2021, the agency released its new *Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*, which was reviewed and approved by DHS and OMB. The plan includes updated, mission-based staffing targets produced by three new staffing allocation models for all workforce categories, including special agents and Uniformed Division officers. Specifically, the strategic plan sets a target of 9,005 employees by 2025 by increasing the Secret Service's workforce by 300 personnel per year during fiscal years 2023 through 2025.²⁷

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: Secret Service officials reported they plan to continue to use targeted hiring efforts to generate sufficient applicants, improve the time-to-hire process, and implement retention programs with a law enforcement emphasis. In addition, the Secret Service stated that it will continue to refine staffing models annually, as necessary.

Panel Recommendation 11: Create more opportunities for officers and agents to provide input on their mission and train its mid- and lower-level managers to encourage, value, and respond to such feedback.

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service requires all new supervisors to complete a curriculum on topics related to workforce communications to facilitate communication between employees and supervisors. The curriculum is intended for special agents, Uniformed Division officers, and APT personnel. Additionally, to improve communication between the workforce and senior leaders, the Secret Service utilizes an online platform for employees to submit ideas and feedback to supervisors.

Details:

- The Secret Service requires all new supervisors to take certain training courses on topics in workforce communications, such as

²⁷The Secret Service's *Fiscal Years 2021-2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan* calls for an increase of 119 personnel in Fiscal Years 2021 and 209 personnel in fiscal year 2022.

courses titled *Seminar for First Line Supervisors*.²⁸ For special agents specifically, the Secret Service requires a course called Online Basics of Supervision prior to applying for a promotion. Secret Service officials reported that in fiscal year 2020, six supervisory communications training courses were offered, which 113 supervisors attended. Secret Service noted that these courses facilitate communication between employees and supervisors.

- Since October 2015, the Secret Service has utilized a platform on its intranet known as Spark! that encourages employees to submit ideas to senior leaders on how to improve the agency's performance. Agency officials noted that a total of 205 Spark! submissions were received in fiscal years 2019 and 2020. Of the 205 suggestions that employees submitted, 15 were implemented, including to allow employees to electronically submit travel vouchers, and the creation of a foreign language speaker database.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: None.

Panel Recommendation 12: Lead the federal protective force community.

According to the Panel, "Collaboration with protective forces like the Federal Protective Service, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, the FBI Police, and the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and other agencies, especially on technology, could significantly increase opportunities for innovation."

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service has engaged with other protective forces across the federal government, such as DHS's Federal Protective Service, through various mechanisms. According to Secret Service officials, the agency participates in various information-sharing mechanisms that the Secret Service has established or that have been established by partners. For example, in May 2018, the Secret Service implemented its Protective Intelligence eXchange —its threat

²⁸Course attendees for *Seminar for First Line Supervisors* include special agents, Uniformed Division officers, and APT personnel.

management database— to allow federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to share protective intelligence information. The Secret Service reports that, as of November 2021, there are over 150 member partners participating in the program, and they continue to conduct outreach to increase participation.

Details:

- The Secret Service has engaged with other protective forces across the federal government, such as DHS’s Federal Protective Service, through various mechanisms established by the Secret Service or its partners, including information- and technology-sharing efforts and a leadership symposium. For example, the Secret Service implemented the Protective Intelligence eXchange in May 2018. The exchange is a web-based threat management database designed to facilitate information-sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies regarding individuals who have expressed an inappropriate interest in a public official and to assess the risk that an individual of interest may pose.²⁹
- The Secret Service reports that, as of November 2021, there are currently over 150 member partners participating in the Protective Intelligence eXchange program, and the Secret Service continues to conduct outreach to increase participation. Secret Service officials reported that use of this tool has increased since 2019. In 2019, Protective Intelligence eXchange users conducted 12,745 queries compared with 14,331 queries in 2020 (a 12 percent increase). Secret Service officials also stated that there has been a 17.5 percent increase in inquiries since the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.
- Secret Service officials also reported that the Critical Protective Analysis Group and its National Threat Assessment Center engage and share information with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners. Specifically, officials reported that the Critical Protective Analysis Group continues to promote intelligence-sharing through unclassified and classified briefings to local, state, federal, and

²⁹Individuals included in the Protective Intelligence eXchange may have threatened public officials, trespassed in protected facilities, or exhibited some other unusual behavior directed at a protected public official. Data in the Protective Intelligence eXchange is provided by participating law enforcement agencies.

international public safety, military, and law enforcement agencies.³⁰ In addition, the National Threat Assessment Center conducts research on threat assessment and various types of targeted violence. It also provides training to federal, state, and local community partners on threat assessment and targeted violence and facilitates information-sharing among agencies with protective or public safety responsibilities.³¹ Examples of virtual trainings that the National Threat Assessment Center has provided include a training on mass attacks in public spaces generally and targeted school violence.³² Secret Service officials reported that the COVID-19 pandemic prevented or made nonessential travel or meeting in person challenging. However, by utilizing virtual platforms to hold trainings and other events, the agency has been able to continue these activities.

- In 2015, the Secret Service chaired a leadership symposium with other federal agencies to discuss roles, responsibilities, and procedures in the event of a critical incident in the National Capital Region and specifically at the White House.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: None.

Panel Recommendation 13: Receive periodic, outside assessments of the threats to and strategies for protecting the White House compound.

According to the Panel, “The Secret Service should engage other federal agencies to evaluate the threats that the agency faces and its ways of doing business.”

³⁰The Critical Protective Analysis Group is a group of analysts and agents who evaluate and present on current terrorism trends and tactics. According to Secret Service officials, this group’s briefings address preoperational surveillance, blending and disguise, penetrating perimeter security, motorcade attacks, homicide bombers, complex attacks, improvised explosive devices, diversionary/secondary attacks, and counterintelligence related to the agency’s operational mission.

³¹According to Secret Service officials, the National Threat Assessment Center also provides case consultation on individual threat assessment investigations and to agencies building threat assessment units and develops programs to promote the standardization of federal, state, and local threat assessment processes and investigations.

³²For example, according to Secret Service officials, the agency held a live virtual training event for the release of its latest publication, *Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools* (Washington, D.C.: March 2021). They stated that registration for this release included 24,609 total registrants, representing all 50 states and 74 countries.

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: Since 2015, the Secret Service has regularly engaged with outside partners to (1) independently assess the threats to the White House complex and (2) assess the Secret Service's protective activities to identify potential vulnerabilities and to validate the agency's strategies' operational effectiveness. The Secret Service reported that it had suspended these assessments in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but had subsequently resumed them by completing an assessment in October 2021.

Details:

- In 2019, we reported that the Secret Service had established a memorandum of agreement with partner agencies to ensure that the outside assessments of threats to the White House continue.³³
- The Secret Service reports that, beginning in 2015, the agency regularly engaged with outside partners to independently (1) assess the threats to the White House complex and (2) assess the Secret Service's protective activities to identify potential vulnerabilities and to validate the agency's strategies' operational effectiveness.
- Between 2015 and 2019, outside partners assessed the threats to and strategies for protecting the White House compound between 2 and 4 times per year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secret Service suspended these assessments in 2020. A senior Secret Service official reported the agency had subsequently resumed them by completing an assessment in October 2021.³⁴

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: None.

Panel Recommendation 14: Resume participation in international forums with comparable protective services of friendly nations.

³³See [GAO-19-415](#).

³⁴The official also told us that the next external assessment is to be conducted in April 2022.

According to the Panel, “While most national protective forces do not compare to the Secret Service, those of certain nations are much more similar than they are different.”

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service, through the Office of Investigations, maintains relationships with international partners to share information. The Secret Service participates in meetings in support of major events worldwide and shares information through training efforts as well.

Details:

- Secret Service officials noted that, as a subcommittee member of the International Security Events Group led by the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security, a Secret Service representative participates in monthly meetings in support of major events worldwide where U.S. citizens participate.
- As we also reported in 2019, the Office of Investigations’ International Programs Division has continued to provide training to foreign law enforcement organizations through the Department of State’s International Law Enforcement Academies. The Secret Service provided training at all five of the academies’ locations from fiscal years 2019 through July 2021.³⁵
- The Secret Service reported that they provided 16 different training courses internationally from 2019 through July 2021 through the International Law Enforcement Academies. According to Secret Service officials, more than 1,000 participants attended from 31 countries. Examples of courses that the Secret Service provided include Basics of Cryptocurrency, Major Events Security Coordination, and Advanced Protective Detail Briefing.
- In April 2021, personnel from the Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center delivered a presentation on averting school attacks to an audience that included Brazilian Law Enforcement officials. According to Secret Service officials, Brazilian officials

³⁵The academies’ five locations are Bangkok, Thailand; Budapest, Hungary; Gaborone, Botswana; San Salvador, El Salvador; and Roswell, New Mexico.

reported that they prevented an attack at a school, using the investigative tactics learned during the presentation.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: The Secret Service will continue to train foreign protective partners and maintain readiness to deliver ad hoc training as needed, as well as to schedule protective courses.

Panel Recommendation 15: Give leadership’s priorities and reform the organization’s sustained attention and hold the agency accountable through to their completion.

According to the Panel, “Following through on reforms and recommendations has been an issue for the Secret Service in the past.”

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: In 2015, the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy was tasked with overseeing and tracking the implementation of the Panel’s recommendations. This office also coordinated the development of key strategy documents to guide the agency’s efforts. Further, Secret Service officials reported that the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy evaluates current and future agency needs and requirements, such as monthly and quarterly reports on key metrics. These include metrics and indicators for hiring and training goals.

Details

- In 2015, the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy was tasked with overseeing and tracking the implementation of the Panel’s recommendations to ensure that the agency implemented them. In 2019, we also reported that the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy coordinated the development of three key strategy documents: the *Fiscal Years 2018–2022 Strategic Plan*, the *Fiscal Years 2018–2025 Training Strategic Plan*, and the *Fiscal Years 2018–2025 Human Capital Strategic Plan*.³⁶

³⁶See [GAO-19-415](#).

- Since our 2019 report, Secret Service officials reported that the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy continues to evaluate current and future agency needs and requirements. They also reported that no substantial changes have been made to the processes and procedures that we reported on in our 2019 report. For example, within this office, the Enterprise Governance and Evaluation Division is to monitor, assess, and report on the extent to which Secret Service systems, programs, and processes are achieving the agency’s intended goals and outcomes. This includes those goals and outcomes set forth in the applicable Secret Service strategy and other guiding documents. Secret Service officials also said that the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy holds the agency accountable through records and statistical and policy processes. For example, agency officials stated that the office tracks and supports both internal and external recommendations to improve the Secret Service. In addition, Secret Service officials stated that the office provides to the leadership monthly reports on key performance metrics, including the average training hours that PPD and VPD special agents have achieved and the hiring goals for the agency. Additionally, the Office of Strategic Planning and Policy continues to chair the Executive Governance Council, which makes recommendations on resourcing options, as well as recommendations on improving the management and execution of the integrated mission.

Additional actions the Secret Service plans to take: None.

Panel Recommendation 16: Implement a disciplinary system in a consistent manner that demonstrates zero tolerance for failures that are incompatible with its zero-failure mission.

According to the Panel, “It is clear that the rank-and-file—and even very senior current and former members of the Secret Service—do not have confidence that discipline is imposed in a fair and consistent manner.”

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: The Secret Service established the Office of Integrity in 2013 to centralize and standardize the disciplinary system across the Secret Service. According to agency officials, for each substantiated incident of employee misconduct, the Chief Integrity Officer and Deputy Chief

Integrity Officer are to determine what formal disciplinary action, if any, is warranted. Further, the Discipline Review Board, composed of senior representatives from each directorate, oversees the disciplinary system and hears appeals from most personnel.³⁷ Disciplinary outcomes are detailed in an annual report to increase transparency within the agency.

Details:

- In 2014, the Secret Service's Office of Integrity established a policy that includes penalty guidelines for different categories of misconduct. The policy also sets forth the responsibilities of all employees related to standards of conduct and establishes governing principles of disciplinary actions.
- In 2019, we reported that the Secret Service's Office of Integrity began publishing an annual discipline report in 2015, which provides an overview of disciplinary actions taken by deciding officials and analyzes misconduct trends. The Secret Service has continued to publish its annual discipline report, with its most recent report issued in April 2021, covering disciplinary actions in calendar year 2020. Secret Service officials noted that the report provides transparency regarding the disciplinary process and demonstrates to employees that the Secret Service takes disciplinary actions seriously. However, it has not identified any particular trends or findings based on the most recent report.
- According to Secret Service officials, the Office of Integrity, in coordination with the Enterprise Policy Division, conducted a formal review of the Office of Integrity's manual to ensure that it is current and in alignment with Secret Service policies, procedures, and responsibilities. On the basis of the review's findings, Secret Service officials noted that the Office of Integrity updates sections of its manual every 4 years. Following policy revisions and a comment period, the manual revision is published.

Additional action(s) the Secret Service plans to take: The Secret Service plans to continue publishing its annual discipline report and to review the Office of Integrity's manual for potential updates at least every 4 years.

³⁷The Secret Service has established a separate disciplinary process for members of the Senior Executive Service.

Panel Recommendation 17: Hold forces accountable for performance by using front-line supervisors to constantly test readiness.

According to the Panel, “To be ready for a job where quick reactions and reflexes are critical, supervisors need to drive home to their officers and agents that the front line is constantly being tested.”

Status: Implementation in progress.

Summary: Secret Service officials told us that, as of November 2021, operational readiness drills are expected to be conducted for the Uniformed Division personnel at least once per month, if protectees’ schedules permit. In addition, front-line supervisors (i.e., sergeants and lieutenants) are to conduct random spot-checks on a daily basis. This recommendation is in progress because work remains to hold forces accountable.

Details

- Secret Service officials reported that Uniformed Division watch commanders are expected to conduct at least one readiness drill per month, per shift, if protectees’ schedules permit. Secret Service officials also told us that the Uniformed Division conducts as many drills as possible each month without unduly disrupting protectees and their staff – generally when protectees are not home. These operational readiness drills include scenarios such as active shooters, suspicious packages, and unlawful entry. The Secret Service also reports that PPD and VPD are included in the drills and that external partners, such as the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department; National Park Service Police; the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, are often included. However, officials noted that there is no formalized policy specifying the frequency of the drills and scenarios because the drills can be held only as often as the protectees’ schedules allow.
- The Secret Service reported that they conduct tabletop exercises quarterly. The Secret Service also reported that PPD and VPD are included in the tabletop exercises.
- Since our report in 2019, no significant changes have been made to ensure forces are held accountable for performance by using front-line supervisors to constantly test readiness.

Additional actions the Secret Service plans to take: None.

Recommendation 18: The next Director of the Secret Service should be a strong leader from outside the agency who has a protective, law enforcement, or military background and who can drive cultural change in the organization and move the Secret Service forward into a new era.

According to the Panel, “The need to change, reinvigorate, and question long-held assumptions—from within the agency itself—is too critical right now for the next director to be an insider.”

Status: Implemented.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: We reported in 2019 that Randolph “Tex” Alles was appointed as the Secret Service Director in 2017 and was in that position until 2019. Mr. Alles had not worked at the Secret Service prior to taking on this role, but he had served previously as Acting Deputy Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and in the U.S. Marine Corps. In May 2019, James M. Murray was appointed as Secret Service Director. Director Murray had served from within the Secret Service supervising at multiple levels of the organization. Director Murray was selected from within the Secret Service. However, as we reported in 2019, the Secret Service Director is appointed through presidential action, as the Secret Service does not select its own Director.

Additional action(s) Secret Service plans to take: None

Panel Recommendation 19. The Secret Service needs to establish a leadership development system that identifies and trains the agency’s future managers and leaders.

According to the Panel, “To promote from within and move the agency forward, however, the Secret Service needs to do a better job of identifying future leaders and preparing them for the role.”

Status: Implemented; ongoing work may be required to sustain implementation.

Actions taken by the Secret Service

Summary: As of November 2021, the Secret Service finalized and implemented its Leadership Development System framework across all occupational categories in the agency – APT, special agent, Technical

Law Enforcement, and Uniformed Division. According to the Secret Service, the framework is intended to promote leadership within individuals, teams, and projects, and result in a positive effect on performance and agency mission accomplishment. In addition, the framework is aligned to related initiatives, such as the agency's Merit Promotion Processes, Career Progression Plans, and Performance Management initiatives.

Details:

- As of November 2021, the Secret Service had finalized and implemented its Leadership Development System framework across all occupational categories in the agency—APT, special agent, Technical Law Enforcement, and Uniformed Division. The Secret Service reported that the Leadership Development System is a competency-based leadership development framework built for all occupational groups and grade levels across the agency. The framework is intended to promote leadership within individuals, teams, and projects that results in a positive effect on performance and agency mission accomplishment. In addition, Secret Service officials reported that the Leadership Development System framework is aligned to related initiatives, such as the agency's Merit Promotion Processes, Career Progression Plans, Mentoring and Leadership Coaching, Succession Management, and Performance Management initiatives. For example, officials reported that when the Secret Service developed the agency's leadership coaching program and its APT Career Progression Plan program, they aligned the competencies of these programs to the leadership competencies in the framework
- In April 2020, the Secret Service launched an updated LEADERnet site. The purpose of the LEADERnet site is to provide a one-stop platform for all resources and information for leader development. Secret Service officials reported that the site is updated monthly, with updates from leadership, recommended books, leadership videos, and training opportunities at the Treasury Executive Institute, as well as leadership-related Ted Talks and podcasts.
- In February 2020, the Secret Service began its leadership coaching pilot program. According to agency officials, the pilot included 58 employees, who were matched with 22 coaches. In March 2021, the Secret Service launched the leadership coaching program to three out of five LEADS tiers: tier 3 (front-line leader), tier 4 (multiunit leader),

and tier 5 (executive leader).³⁸ Officials reported that, as of July 2021, 52 employees were enrolled and matched to 29 coaches.

- In June 2021, the Secret Service implemented its APT Career Progression Plan program, which was discussed above in regard to Panel Recommendation 5.

Additional actions the Secret Service plans to take: Secret Service officials reported that they plan to finalize and launch a Secret Service mentoring program. According to them, this program will focus on the development of all leadership tiers across all job categories. They also stated that they plan to complete the redesign of their Strategic Leadership for Managers Course in fiscal year 2022.

³⁸The framework's first two tiers are for aspiring leaders and emerging leaders. An aspiring leader (tier 1) is defined, in part, as accountable to themselves. An emerging leader (tier 2) is defined as leading projects and adhoc teams by influencing others without formal authority, or with delegated authority. A front-line leader (tier 3) is defined as leading with formal authority while managing others and performing technical duties. A multiunit leader (tier 4) is defined as managing other managers or complex policies, procedures, and programs, who implements strategies and goals set by executive leadership. An executive leader (tier 5) is defined as setting a strategic vision and goals for the Secret Service overall or for major organizational divisions or directorates.

Appendix II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Joseph P. Cruz (Assistant Director), Michael C. Lenington (Analyst-in-Charge), and Melissa Hargy made key contributions to this report. In addition, key support was provided by Christine Davis, Eric Hauswirth, Susan Hsu, and Amanda Miller.

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