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U.S. Government Accountability Office
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September 29, 2023

The Honorable Mark Warner
Chairman
The Honorable Marco Rubio
Vice Chairman
Select Committee on Intelligence
United States Senate
The Honorable Michael Turner
Chairman
The Honorable Jim Himes
Ranking Member
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
House of Representatives

Status of Open GAO Recommendations Made to the Director of National Intelligence

GAO's mission is to support the Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities, and in accomplishing that mission we make recommendations to improve the accountability, operations, and services of government agencies and increase the effectiveness of federal spending. In fiscal year 2022, our work yielded about \$55.6 billion in financial benefits—a return of about \$74 for every dollar invested in GAO.¹ We also identified 1,262 other benefits—those that cannot be measured in dollars but that led to program and operational improvements across the government, including at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 included a provision for the Comptroller General to annually submit a list to the congressional Intelligence Committees and to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) of all open recommendations made by GAO to the DNI.² The provision also directs the DNI to submit a report of actions taken and actions the DNI intends to take in response to each open recommendation within 120 days of receiving the list. This report and its enclosures formally transmits and communicates the final results of our work. It describes DNI's (1) progress in implementing recommendations from GAO reports issued from July 2011 through September 15, 2023; (2) initial response to open recommendations; and (3) progress in implementing priority recommendations.³ Enclosure 1

¹GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2022*, [GAO-23-900398](#), (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 2022).

²Pub. L. No. 117-263, § 6304 (2022). This provision requires the Comptroller General to submit the annual list no later than September 30, 2023 and each September 30 thereafter through 2028.

³Priority recommendations are those that GAO believes warrant priority attention from heads of key departments or agencies. They are highlighted because, upon implementation, they may significantly improve government operation, for example, by realizing large dollar savings; eliminating mismanagement, fraud, and abuse; or making progress toward addressing a high-risk or duplication issue.

includes a list of the open unclassified recommendations and enclosure 2 includes a list of the open classified recommendations that we have made to the DNI since July 2011.

The scope of the engagement included all recommendations directed to the DNI in unclassified, sensitive but unclassified (SBU), and classified reports issued from July 2011 through September 15, 2023. To identify the specific recommendations directed to the DNI, we queried the GAO recommendation follow-up system for unclassified recommendations and reviewed GAO records for classified and SBU recommendations. We identified ODNI's initial response of concurrence, partial concurrence, or non-concurrence to our recommendations from reports where ODNI provided formal written comments on the associated draft reports. We were unable to provide ODNI's position on 27 recommendations for the reports where ODNI did not provide a formal response to our recommendations in writing. To determine the status of open recommendations, we contacted ODNI officials to obtain information on ODNI's efforts to implement them.⁴ Where applicable and when available, we ascertained ODNI's rationale for partially implementing or not implementing recommendations or for closing recommendations that we consider to be open and determined the implementation status of each recommendation based on our review of the information collected.

We conducted this limited investment engagement from June 2023 to September 2023 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.

Overview of GAO Recommendations

In summary, we have made 98 recommendations to the DNI since 2011. As of September 15, 2023, ODNI has implemented 30 recommendations, for an implementation rate of 31 percent.⁵ In November 2022, we reported that on a government-wide basis, 77 percent implementation rate of our recommendations made in fiscal years 2018 through 2022. For this same time period, ODNI's rate of implementation for recommendations made in fiscal years 2018 through 2022 was 7 percent as of May 2023. This is well below the government-wide average of 77 percent.

As of September 15, 2023, ODNI had not implemented 63 of the 98 recommendations to the DNI since 2011, or 64 percent of the recommendations, remained open. Table 1 provides an overview of the recommendations made and the status of their implementation through September 15, 2023.⁶

⁴In March 2023, ODNI responded to some of the open recommendations and stated that it had taken action to address 10 of the open recommendations. However, as of September 15, 2023, ODNI did not provide requested documentation of actions taken in response to these recommendations. As a result, GAO cannot assess the steps taken to determine whether the recommendations can be closed.

⁵ODNI's 31 percent implementation rate reflects recommendations made to the DNI since 2011. We closed an additional five recommendations as not implemented.

⁶Recommendations remain open until they are designated as *closed-implemented* or *closed-not implemented*. GAO closes a recommendation as not implemented when circumstances have changed and the recommendation is no longer valid or when, in our professional judgment, sufficient time has passed and the agency is unlikely to implement the recommendation.

Table 1: Recommendations Made by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and Implementation Status, from July 2011 through September 15, 2023

Total recommendations	Recommendations open or open–partially addressed ^a	Recommendations closed–not implemented ^b	Recommendations closed–implemented
98	63	5	30

Source: GAO. | GAO-23-106892

^aGAO lists a recommendation as *open-partially addressed* when the agency has completed action(s) that contributes to the closure of the recommendation as implemented. However, the recommendations remain open until all actions to implement the recommendation have been completed.

^bGAO closes a recommendation as not implemented when circumstances have changed and the recommendation is no longer valid; or in our professional judgment, sufficient time has passed and the agency is unlikely to implement the recommendation.

The enclosures to this correspondence identify the 63 unclassified and classified recommendations directed to the DNI that remain open. The recommendations relate to areas of contracting, human capital, enterprise management, personnel security, and infrastructure.⁷ By fully implementing these recommendations, ODNI could improve its ability to help ensure the intelligence community best manages its workforce and infrastructure in order to fulfill its mission of providing intelligence to decision makers, and could improve the intelligence community’s ability to efficiently and effectively perform mission activities.

GAO provides responsible agency officials with an opportunity to review and provide comments on a draft of a product before it is issued. GAO seeks agency comments to ensure products are fair, objective, balanced, and complete. In its response to GAO’s draft reports, ODNI concurred or partially concurred with 34 of the 63 open recommendations, or 54 percent of the recommendations made since 2011. However, ODNI did not provide comments on 27 recommendations, or about 43 percent of the recommendations. Table 2 provides an overview of ODNI’s response to the 63 recommendations that remain open as of September 15, 2023.

Table 2: Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) Response to Open Recommendations Issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), from July 2011 through September 15, 2023

Total open recommendations	ODNI Concurred	ODNI Partially Concurred	ODNI Did Not Concur	ODNI Did Not Provide Comment
63	28	6	2	27

Source: GAO. | GAO-23-106892

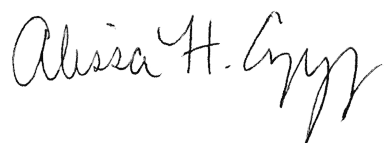
In 2022, GAO issued its first priority recommendation letter to the DNI. In the letter, we designated 19 of those recommendations as priority recommendations.⁸ As of September 15, 2023, ODNI had not implemented any of the 19 priority recommendations.

⁷Due to the classified nature of some of the recommendations, additional details on the recommendations in the key areas noted in this report can be found in Enclosure 2, the classified enclosure.

⁸GAO, *Priority Open Recommendations: Office of the Director of National Intelligence*, [GAO-22-105852](#), (Washington, DC: Sept. 1, 2022). In May 2023 we issued the second annual priority recommendation letter to the DNI. We did not designate any additional recommendations as priority recommendations in our 2023 letter. GAO, *Priority Open Recommendations: Office of the Director of National Intelligence*, [GAO-23-106579](#), (Washington, DC: May 11, 2023).

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

If you or your staff has any questions about this report and accompanying enclosures, please contact me at (202) 512- 3058 or CzyzA@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report include Kristy Williams (Assistant Director), Alice Paszel (Analyst-in-Charge), Colleen Berny, Tracy Barnes, and Jamila Jones Kennedy.



Alissa H. Czyz
 Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Enclosures – 2

Enclosure I: Overview of Open Unclassified Recommendations to the Director of National Intelligence in U.S. Government Accountability Office Reports, from July 2011 through September 15, 2023

Table 3 outlines the unclassified recommendations made to the Director of National Intelligence since 2011 that remain open.

Table 3: List of Open Unclassified Recommendations Made to the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) from July 2011 through September 12, 2023^a			
Report title and number	Recommendation	Priority recommendation	ODNI response
<i>Personnel Security Clearances: Additional Guidance and Oversight Needed at the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense to Ensure Consistent Application of Revocation Process</i> , GAO-14-640 (Washington, D.C., Sept., 8, 2014)	To facilitate department-wide review and assessment of the quality of the personnel security clearance revocation process, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) should, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, develop performance measures to better enable them to identify and resolve problems, and direct the collection of related revocation and appeals information. (Recommendation 9)	No	Concur

Report title and number	Recommendation	Priority recommendation	ODNI response
<p><i>Personnel Security Clearances: Additional Guidance and Oversight Needed at the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense to Ensure Consistent Application of Revocation Process</i>, GAO-14-640 (Washington, D.C., Sept., 8, 2014)</p>	<p>To help ensure that similarly situated individuals are treated consistently, and to facilitate oversight and help ensure the quality of the security clearance revocation process, the DNI should review whether the existing security clearance revocation process is the most efficient and effective approach. In this review, the DNI should consider whether there should be a single personnel security clearance revocation process used across all executive-branch agencies and workforces, with consideration of areas such as the timing of the personal appearance in the revocation process, and the ability to cross-examine witnesses. Further, to the extent that a single process or changes to the existing parallel processes are warranted, the DNI should consider whether there is a need to establish any policies and procedures to facilitate a more consistent process, and recommend as needed any revisions to existing executive orders or other executive-branch guidance. (Recommendation 13)</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Concur</p>
<p><i>Personnel Security Clearances: Plans Needed to Fully Implement and Oversee Continuous Evaluation of Clearance Holders</i>, GAO-18-117 (Washington, D.C., Nov. 21, 2017)</p>	<p>The DNI should develop performance measures for continuous evaluation that agencies must track and determine a process and schedule for agencies to regularly report those measures to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). At minimum, these performance measures should be clear, quantifiable, objective, and linked to measurable goals. (Recommendation 4)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Partial Concur</p>
<p><i>Personnel Security Clearances: Plans Needed to Fully Implement and Oversee Continuous Evaluation of Clearance Holders</i>, GAO-18-117 (Washington, D.C., Nov. 21, 2017)</p>	<p>The DNI should, in coordination with the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget in the capacity as Chair of the Security, Suitability, and Credentialing Performance Accountability Council, conduct an evidence-based review of the timeliness goal of 195 days for completing the fastest 90 percent of periodic reinvestigations and the associated goals for the different phases of periodic reinvestigations, and adjust the goal if appropriate, taking into consideration available resources, the additional workload of continuous evaluation, and the risks associated with individuals retaining access to classified information without determining their continued eligibility. (Recommendation 5)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Partial Concur</p>

Report title and number	Recommendation	Priority recommendation	ODNI response
<p><i>Personnel Security Clearances: Plans Needed to Fully Implement and Oversee Continuous Evaluation of Clearance Holders</i>, GAO-18-117 (Washington, D.C., Nov. 21, 2017)</p>	<p>The DNI should, once ODNI has further defined the continuous evaluation program, to include issuing a Security Executive Agent Directive and developing an implementation plan, in coordination with the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget in the capacity as Chair of the Security, Suitability, and Credentialing Performance Accountability Council, assess the potential effects of continuous evaluation on agency resources and develop a plan, in consultation with implementing agencies, to address those effects, such as modifying the scope of periodic reinvestigations, changing the frequency of periodic reinvestigations, or replacing periodic reinvestigations for certain clearance holders. (Recommendation 6)</p>	No	Partial Concur
<p><i>Personnel Security Clearances: Additional Actions Needed to Ensure Quality, Address Timeliness, and Reduce Investigation Backlog</i>, GAO-18-29 (Washington, D.C., Dec. 12, 2017)</p>	<p>The DNI, in his capacity as Security Executive Agent, and in coordination with the other Security, Suitability, and Credentialing Performance Accountability Council (PAC) Principals--the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget in his capacity as Chair of the PAC, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence--should conduct an evidence-based review of the investigation and adjudication timeliness objectives for completing the fastest 90 percent of initial secret and initial top secret security clearances. (Recommendation 2)</p>	Yes	Non-concur
<p><i>Personnel Security Clearances: Additional Actions Needed to Ensure Quality, Address Timeliness, and Reduce Investigation Backlog</i>, GAO-18-29 (Washington, D.C., Dec. 12, 2017)</p>	<p>The DNI, in his capacity as Security Executive Agent, and in coordination with the other PAC Principals--the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget in his capacity as Chair of the PAC, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence--should develop a government-wide plan, including goals and interim milestones, to meet those timeliness objectives for initial personnel security clearance investigations and adjudications. (Recommendation 3)</p>	No	Non-concur
<p><i>Intelligence Community: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program</i>, GAO-19-529 (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1, 2019)</p>	<p>The DNI should establish and document results-oriented goals that include specific targets or milestones for the Intelligence Community (IC) Centers for Academic Excellence (CAE) program. (Recommendation 1)^b</p>	Yes	Concur
<p><i>Intelligence Community: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program</i>, GAO-19-529 (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1, 2019)</p>	<p>The DNI should establish and document strategies to achieve the results-oriented goals that are established for the IC CAE program. (Recommendation 2)^b</p>	No	Concur

Report title and number	Recommendation	Priority recommendation	ODNI response
<i>Intelligence Community: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program, GAO-19-529</i> (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1, 2019)	The DNI should define and document comprehensive performance measures for the IC CAE program, collect and evaluate the completeness and reliability of information it receives from grant recipients and IC elements, and report this information on a regular basis. (Recommendation 4)	No	Concur
<i>Intelligence Community: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program, GAO-19-529</i> (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1, 2019)	The DNI should establish a requirement for and develop a plan to periodically evaluate the IC CAE program's performance through objective measurement and systematic analysis. (Recommendation 5)	No	Concur
<i>Intelligence Community: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program, GAO-19-529</i> (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1, 2019)	The DNI should develop a process for assessing why some IC elements are not participating in the IC CAE program and address these reasons in order to ensure the program is structured to meet the needs of IC elements. (Recommendation 6)	No	Concur
<i>Intelligence Community: Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program, GAO-19-529</i> (Washington, D.C., Aug. 1, 2019)	The DNI should clearly define IC elements' roles and responsibilities for participation in the IC CAE program to better facilitate interagency collaboration in support of the program. (Recommendation 7)	Yes	Concur
<i>Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight, GAO-21-83</i> (Washington, D.C., Dec. 17, 2020)	The DNI, in consultation with the department secretary or head of the IC element, as appropriate, and consistent with the DNI's authority, should issue new or update existing guidance to require all IC elements to maintain current and complete diversity strategic plans that contain specific objectives, timeframes, and responsibilities. (Recommendation 1)	Yes	Concur
<i>Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight, GAO-21-83</i> (Washington, D.C., Dec. 17, 2020)	The DNI, in consultation with the department secretary or head of the IC element, as appropriate, and consistent with the DNI's authority, should issue new or update existing guidance to ensure that IC elements develop performance measures to assess the contribution of activities toward achieving diversity goals and overall progress. (Recommendation 3)	Yes	Concur
<i>Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight, GAO-21-83</i> (Washington, D.C., Dec. 17, 2020)	The DNI, in consultation with the department secretary or head of the IC element, as appropriate, and consistent with the DNI's authority, should issue new or update existing guidance to ensure that each IC element routinely identifies and takes steps toward eliminating barriers to workforce diversity. (Recommendation 5)	No	Concur

Report title and number	Recommendation	Priority recommendation	ODNI response
<p><i>Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight</i>, GAO-21-83 (Washington, D.C., Dec. 17, 2020)</p>	<p>The DNI, in consultation with the department secretary or head of the IC element, as appropriate, and consistent with the DNI's authority, should establish specific implementation objectives and timeframes for the IC elements that support IC-wide diversity goals to ensure IC elements are held accountable for making progress. (Recommendation 7)</p>	Yes	Concur
<p><i>Personnel Vetting: Actions Needed to Implement Reforms, Address Challenges, and Improve Planning</i>, GAO-22-104093 (Washington, D.C., Dec. 9, 2021)</p>	<p>The DNI, in consultation with the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, should ensure that the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center develops performance measures for assessing the quality of all phases of the personnel security clearance process that align with the key attributes of successful performance measures. (Recommendation 1)</p>	Yes	No Comment
<p><i>Violent Extremism: Agencies' and Financial Institutions' Efforts to Link Financing to Domestic Threats</i>, GAO-23-105928, (Washington, D.C., Sept. 13, 2023)</p>	<p>The Director of National Counterterrorism Center, in consultation with FBI and DHS, should ensure its process for developing any future updates to the U.S. Violent Extremist Mobilization Indicators booklet clarifies that Treasury can and should seek input and expertise from Financial Crimes Enforcement Network on potential financial indicators. (Recommendation 1)</p>	No	No Comment

Source: GAO. | GAO-23-106892

^aFrom 2011 through 2013 GAO issued seven reports with 20 recommendations made to DNI. These 20 recommendations are closed as implemented.

^bThese recommendations are *open-partially addressed*. A recommendation status is listed as *open-partially addressed* when the agency has completed action(s) that contributes to the closure of the recommendation as implemented. However, the recommendations remain open until all actions to implement the recommendation have been completed.