



Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-10-156](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

State Department's (State) Bureau of Diplomatic Security (Diplomatic Security) is responsible for the protection of people, information, and property at over 400 foreign missions and domestic locations. Diplomatic Security must be prepared to counter threats such as crime, espionage, visa and passport fraud, technological intrusions, political violence, and terrorism. GAO was asked to assess (1) how Diplomatic Security's mission has evolved since 1998, (2) how its resources have changed over the last 10 years, and (3) the challenges it faces in conducting its missions. GAO analyzed Diplomatic Security data; reviewed relevant documents; and interviewed officials at several domestic facilities and 18 international missions.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State review the Bureau of Diplomatic Security—as part of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) or separately—to ensure that its mission addresses the department's priority needs. This review should address challenges such as: (1) operating with adequate staff, (2) securing facilities that do not meet security standards, (3) staffing foreign missions with officials who have appropriate language skills, (4) operating programs with experienced staff, and (5) balancing security with State's diplomatic mission.

State agreed with GAO's recommendation and stated that it is completely committed to ensuring that Diplomatic Security's mission will benefit from the QDDR.

View [GAO-10-156](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov.

STATE DEPARTMENT

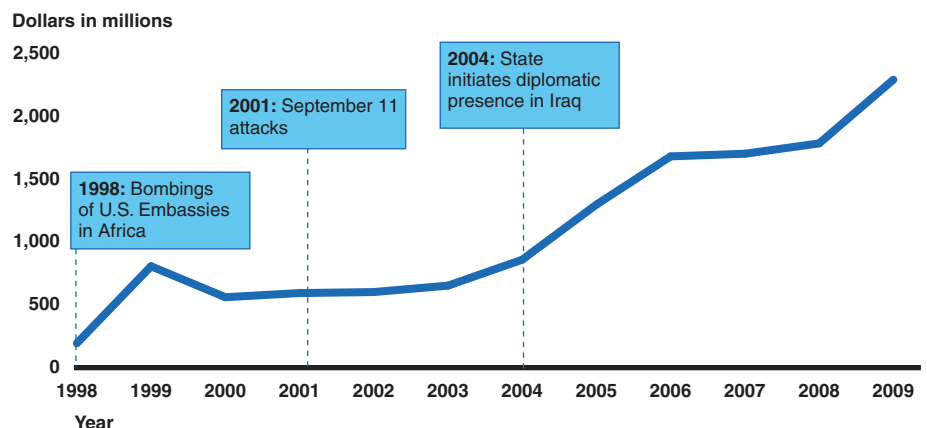
Diplomatic Security's Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review

What GAO Found

Diplomatic Security's mission, to ensure a safe environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, involves activities such as the protection of people, information, and property overseas, and dignitary protection and passport and visa fraud investigations domestically. These activities have grown since 1998 in reaction to a number of security incidents.

Diplomatic Security funding and personnel have also increased considerably over the last 10 years. In 1998, Diplomatic Security's budget was about \$200 million; by fiscal year 2008, it had grown to approximately \$1.8 billion, of which over \$300 million was for security in Iraq (see fig.). In addition, the size of Diplomatic Security's direct-hire workforce has doubled since 1998 and will likely continue to expand. Recently, Diplomatic Security's reliance on contractors has grown to fill critical needs in high-threat posts.

Diplomatic Security Budget, 1998-2009



Source: GAO analysis of Diplomatic Security data.

Diplomatic Security faces several challenges that could affect the bureau's ability to provide security and use its resources efficiently. First, State's policy to maintain missions in increasingly dangerous posts requires a substantial amount of resources. Second, although Diplomatic Security's workforce has grown considerably over the last 10 years, staffing shortages in domestic offices and other operational challenges—such as inadequate facilities, language deficiencies, experience gaps, and balancing security needs with State's diplomatic mission—further tax its ability to implement all of its missions. Finally, Diplomatic Security's tremendous growth has been in reaction to events and does not benefit from adequate strategic guidance. Neither State's departmental strategic plan nor Diplomatic Security's bureau strategic plan specifically addresses the bureau's resource needs or management challenges.