



441 G St. N.W.  
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Comptroller General  
of the United States

April 11, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

**Priority Open Recommendations: Department of State**

Dear Secretary Rubio:

Congratulations on your appointment. The purpose of this letter is to call your personal attention to three areas based on GAO's past work and 13 open priority recommendations, which are enclosed.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, there are 619 other open recommendations that we will continue to work with your staff to address.

We are highlighting the following areas that warrant timely and focused attention. Specifically:

**Addressing weaknesses in cybersecurity.** State has not fully implemented its program to identify and monitor risk to assets and the information maintained on its systems. As we reported in September 2023, until the department implements required risk management activities, it lacks assurance that its security controls are operating as intended.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, State is likely not fully aware of information security vulnerabilities and threats affecting mission operations.

GAO recommends that State take several actions, including (1) mitigating known vulnerabilities, (2) conducting bureau-level risk assessments for the 28 bureaus that owned information systems that GAO reviewed, (3) ensuring that its information systems have valid authorizations to operate in accordance with department policies and federal guidance, (4) ensuring that the Chief Information Officer (CIO) has access to assets at bureaus and posts to continuously monitor for threats and vulnerabilities that may affect mission operations, (5) ensuring that all system contingency plans for high value assets are tested annually as required by department policies, and (6) directing the CIO to update an October 2020 matrix to better ensure compliance with applicable department policies and federal guidance. In addition, there are about 500 recommendations related to technical security control deficiencies in State's IT infrastructure that also warrant attention.

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<sup>1</sup>GAO considers a recommendation to be a priority if, when implemented, it may significantly improve government operations, for example, by realizing large dollar savings; eliminating mismanagement, fraud, and abuse; or making progress toward addressing a high-risk or duplication issue.

<sup>2</sup>GAO, *Cybersecurity: State Needs to Expediently Implement Risk Management and Other Key Practices*, [GAO-23-107012](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2023).

Until our recommendations are addressed, State will not have assurance that privacy protections are adequately incorporated into relevant systems, and it is sufficiently aware of its risks and that security controls are operating as intended. In addition, there is increased risk that malicious actors could compromise the department's information systems.

**Strengthening foreign assistance monitoring.** State should take steps to improve its monitoring of foreign assistance to ensure U.S. goals and interests are protected. For example:

- State obligates billions of dollars in foreign assistance, including to support selected non-security humanitarian, stabilization, and development assistance. Implementing partners play a key role in executing this assistance. For example, between February 2022 and September 2023, State and USAID had 111 implementing partners carrying out 197 awards for non-security assistance in Ukraine. However, State has yet to periodically monitor how implementing partners screen sub-partners for past performance when selecting them for sub-awards. Such monitoring would help ensure sub-partners are able to effectively fulfill all the requirements and obligations of their sub-awards. Without periodic past performance monitoring, State has a greater risk of performance issues in sub-awards.
- Similarly, since 2008, the U.S. has provided over \$3 billion in assistance to Mexico, chiefly guided by the Mérida Initiative and its replacement, the Bicentennial Framework. State develops strategies, including cooperative arrangements, to guide its foreign assistance efforts and reports to Congress on the performance of these strategies. However, State has yet to develop monitoring and evaluation plans to measure progress toward the goals of the Bicentennial Framework. Doing so would help State better assess the effectiveness of U.S. assistance in Mexico as we have recommended.

**Improving overseas real property planning.** Since 2003, our high-risk reports have consistently highlighted long-standing challenges that federal agencies face in managing federal real property.<sup>3</sup> State operates and maintains nearly 8,500 owned and 280 capital-leased properties—including buildings and other structures—at more than 270 U.S. embassies, consulates, and other posts overseas. These properties may face risks related to deferred maintenance and repair or natural hazards.

Specifically, State has yet to (1) develop a plan to address its deferred maintenance and repair backlog and (2) align its natural hazard resilience plans with program staffing levels as appropriate. Fully implementing our priority recommendations would better position State to improve how it maintains and supports its overseas properties.

Please see Enclosure 1 for additional details about the status and actions needed to fully implement all 13 open priority recommendations out of the 632 total recommendations that remain open. This includes priority recommendations on improving data quality, complying with congressional reporting requirements, and enhancing training efforts.

We also provide additional information on State's recommendation implementation rate and implemented, closed, and new priority recommendations since our June 2024 letter to Secretary Blinken and relevant management challenges from our high-risk list that apply to State in Enclosure 2. In response to legislation enacted in December 2022, this enclosure also includes

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<sup>3</sup>GAO, *High-Risk Series: Heightened Attention Could Save Billions More and Improve Government Efficiency and Effectiveness*, [GAO-25-107743](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 25, 2025).

information on any additional congressional oversight actions that can help agencies implement priority recommendations and address any underlying issues relating to such implementation.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the appropriate congressional committees. The letter will also be available on the GAO website at [Priority Recommendations | U.S. GAO](#). We also plan to send a separate letter specifically focused on open recommendations and key issues related to information technology. This letter will be sent to your Chief Information Officer.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the issues outlined in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kimberly Gianopoulos, Managing Director, International Affairs and Trade, at [gianopoulosk@gao.gov](mailto:gianopoulosk@gao.gov). Contact points for our offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this letter. Our teams will continue to coordinate with your staff on addressing these priority recommendations and the remaining 619 recommendations. I appreciate State's continued commitment and thank you for your personal attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

**//SIGNED//**

Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosures – 2

cc: Ambassador Maria Brewer, Acting Director, Foreign Service Institute

José Cunningham, Assistant Secretary for Administration, Bureau of Administration  
(performing the duties of the Under Secretary of Management)

Dr. Kelly Fletcher, Chief Information Officer for the Department of State

Patricia Lacina, Director, Bureau of Overseas Building Operations

Christopher Landau, Deputy Secretary of State

Peter Marocco, Director, Office of Foreign Assistance

Julie Stufft, Senior Bureau Official, Bureau of Consular Affairs

James A. Walsh, Comptroller for the Department of State (carrying out the delegated  
authorities and responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer)

Cartwright Weiland, Senior Bureau Official, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law  
Enforcement Affairs

## Enclosure 1

### Priority Open Recommendations to Department of State

#### Addressing Weaknesses in Cybersecurity

*Privacy: Dedicated Leadership Can Improve Programs and Address Challenges.* [GAO-22-105065](#). Washington, D.C.: September 22, 2022.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2022

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should establish a time frame for fully defining the role of the senior agency official for privacy or other designated privacy official in reviewing and approving system categorizations, overseeing privacy control assessments, and reviewing authorization packages, and document these roles.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. To fully implement our recommendation, State needs to develop and document policies and procedures specifying the roles that its senior agency official or other designated privacy officials are to play when authorizing systems with personally identifiable information. As of September 2024, State noted that it was finalizing updates to its policies that would fully define and document these roles. However, as of February 2025, State had not provided additional evidence of its efforts to address this recommendation. Taking these actions would help State ensure that privacy protections are adequately incorporated into the relevant systems.

#### High-Risk Area: [Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation](#)

**Director:** Jennifer R. Franks, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

**Contact Information:** [franksj@gao.gov](mailto:franksj@gao.gov)

*Cybersecurity: State Needs to Expediently Implement Risk Management and Other Key Practices.* [GAO-23-107012](#). Washington, D.C.: September 28, 2023.

**Year Recommendations Made:** 2023

#### Recommendations:

- The Secretary of State should direct the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to develop and maintain a department-wide risk profile that prioritizes the department's most significant risks, including the areas of exposure and threats that State identified, consistent with federal requirements.
- The Secretary of State should direct the CIO to ensure that State's information systems have valid authorizations to operate in accordance with department policies and federal guidance.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with these recommendations. According to State, it is working to develop and maintain a Cyber Risk Register that prioritizes the Department's most significant cyber risks. In addition, State has continued to make progress on ensuring its information systems have valid authorizations. As of February 2025, these recommendations remain open until we receive evidence of State's actions to address them. Fully implementing these priority

recommendations would (1) position State to better mitigate risks and potentially stop malicious actors from compromising its information systems and (2) provide State with assurance that it will be aware of risks and that security controls are operating as intended.

**High-Risk Area:** [Ensuring the Cybersecurity of the Nation](#)

**Director:** Jennifer R. Franks, Information Technology and Cybersecurity

**Contact Information:** [franksj@gao.gov](mailto:franksj@gao.gov)

**Strengthening Foreign Assistance Monitoring**

*Ukraine: State and USAID Should Improve Processes for Ensuring Partners Can Perform Required Work.* [GAO-24-106751](#). Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2024.

**Year Recommendations Made:** 2024

**Recommendations:**

- The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of Administration, Office of the Procurement Executive establish a requirement in the Federal Assistance Directive for State award officials to periodically monitor the implementation of non-governmental organization implementing partners' procedures for screening sub-partners for past performance when selecting them for sub-awards.
- The Secretary of State should ensure that the Bureau of Administration, Office of the Procurement Executive establish a requirement in the Federal Assistance Directive for State award officials to periodically monitor the implementation of international organization implementing partners' procedures for screening sub-partners for past performance when selecting them for sub-awards.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with these recommendations. In response to our recommendations, the State Department's Bureau of Administration, Office of Global Acquisition (formerly the Office of the Procurement Executive), updated the Federal Assistance Directive. The revision clarifies that, when appropriate, award officials may monitor implementing partners to ensure they are following their own procedures for screening sub-partners for sub-awards. However, the revised Federal Assistance Directive lacks specific guidance on monitoring procedures. To fully implement our recommendations, State should specify when and how often award officials should monitor implementing partners' implementation of their procedures for screening of sub-partners for past performance during sub-partner selection. Additionally, State should outline the specific steps award officials are required to take to conduct such monitoring. Implementing these priority recommendations would help State reduce the risk of inadequate screening by implementing partners while helping to ensure that sub-partners are effective in meeting sub-award requirements and delivering necessary assistance.

**Director:** Latesha Love-Grayer, International Affairs and Trade

**Contact Information:** [lovegrayerl@gao.gov](mailto:lovegrayerl@gao.gov)

*U.S. Assistance to Mexico: State Department Should Take Steps to Assess Overall Progress.* [GAO-23-103795](#). Washington, D.C.: September 12, 2023.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2023

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), should ensure the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) develops monitoring and evaluation plans critical to assess progress toward the goals and objectives of the Bicentennial Framework.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. In March 2024, State said it was developing a monitoring and evaluation plan, in consultation with USAID, to assess assistance to Mexico. However, as of January 2025, State had not completed a monitoring and evaluation plan or identified milestones for the indicators, which can help INL gauge progress toward their goals. In February 2025, State officials informed us that their foreign assistance efforts have been paused pending the results of a review directed by Executive Order 14169.

Once the evaluation has been completed, to fully implement our recommendation, State should complete developing its monitoring and evaluation plan. Implementing this priority recommendation would help State systematically assess progress toward achieving the Bicentennial Framework's goals.

**High-Risk Area:** [National Efforts to Prevent, Respond to, and Recover from Drug Misuse](#)

**Director:** Chelsa Kenney, International Affairs and Trade

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**Improving Overseas Real Property Planning**

*Overseas Real Property: Prioritizing Key Assets and Developing a Plan Could Help State Manage Its Estimated \$3 Billion Maintenance Backlog.* [GAO-21-497](#). Washington, D.C.: September 15, 2021.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2021

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) develops a plan to address State's deferred maintenance and repair backlog, and specifically identifies the funding and time frames needed to reduce it in congressional budget requests, related reports to decision-makers, or both.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. State officials said OBO's plan to address the backlog relies on a two-pronged approach related to (1) replacing and renovating facilities and (2) executing routine maintenance and repair and disposing of underutilized assets. However, State has not provided us with OBO's plan as of February 2025. To fully implement our recommendation, State needs to provide us with its plan and share the funding and time frames needed to address it with key decision-makers, including Congress. Implementing this priority recommendation would help decision-makers better understand how funding levels affect backlog reduction.

**High-Risk Area:** [Managing Federal Real Property](#)

**Director:** Nagla'a El-Hodiri, International Affairs and Trade

**Contact Information:** [elhodirin@gao.gov](mailto:elhodirin@gao.gov)

*Overseas Real Property: State Has Not Aligned Natural Hazard Resilience Plans to Staffing Levels.* [GAO-23-105887](#). Washington, D.C.: June 22, 2023.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2023

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of OBO, following the final staffing and resource decisions based on the agency's fiscal year 2024 appropriations, revisits the Climate Security and Resilience Program plans, including goals and time frames, and adjusts the plans as appropriate.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. State said that it is committed to providing resources for the Natural Hazards Adaption (NHA) Program, formerly the Climate Security and Resilience Program. For example, in fiscal year 2023, OBO reprogrammed three existing positions to dedicate staff to this program and hired four contract staff in 2024. In December 2024, OBO said State continues to pursue hiring five additional staff for the program. OBO said current and future staff positions would adequately support the NHA Program plans adjusted to reflect staffing resources. However, in January 2025, the President issued a Presidential Memorandum freezing the hiring of federal civilian employees.

To fully implement our recommendation, State should revisit and adjust the NHA Program plans as appropriate following final staffing and resource decisions. Implementing this priority recommendation would allow State to leverage the program to support State's natural hazards adaptation and resilience goals for its overseas properties.

**High-Risk Area:** [Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks](#)

**Director:** Nagla'a El-Hodiri, International Affairs and Trade

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**Improving Data Quality**

*Overseas Allowances: State Should Assess the Cost-Effectiveness of Its Hardship Pay Policies.* [GAO-17-715](#). Washington, D.C.: September 13, 2017.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2017

**Recommendation:** The department's Comptroller should analyze available diplomatic cable data from overseas posts to identify posts at risk of improper payments for hardship pay, identify any improper payments, and take steps to recover and prevent them.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. According to State, it continues to identify and seek repayment of improper payments and communicate the importance of timely actions to regional bureaus and posts to ensure improper payments do not occur. In addition, the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services (CGFS) has rolled out the Overseas Personnel System, which centralizes the collection of arrival and departure data for calculating improper payment notification and risk analysis. It is also rolling out a new self-service portal, which would eliminate the cables required for turning on and off hardship pay, when fully implemented.

Moreover, officials believe that changes State implemented in 2021 to streamline the department's hardship policy have significantly reduced the risk of improper payments. However, as of February 2025, CGFS had not provided us with the analysis to verify this assertion. Fully implementing this priority recommendation would better position State to identify, recover, and prevent improper payments that could produce cost savings for the U.S. government.

**Potential Financial Benefit if Implemented:** Identified but no estimate

**Director:** Nagla'a El-Hodiri, International Affairs and Trade

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*Consular Affairs: State May Be Unable to Cover Projected Costs if Revenues Do Not Quickly Rebound to Pre-Pandemic Levels.* [GAO-22-104424](#). Washington, D.C.: April 18, 2022.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2022

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should ensure the Bureau of Consular Affairs develops a plan to assess and document what fee amounts, statutory changes, supplemental and annual funding, or other actions would allow State to cover future consular costs.

**Actions Needed:** State did not agree with this recommendation. State noted that its cost model presents unrecovered costs by service. State officials said recent short-term surges in fee revenue, combined with a continuation of broader expenditure authorities first enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic through 2024, allow the Bureau of Consular Affairs to maintain its fee-funded structure that supports the consular mission in the near term. This trend is expected to cover projected consular costs through at least fiscal year 2026, according to State.

We maintain it is important for State to develop a plan to assess and document which measures would be sufficient to cover future consular costs. In January 2024, State officials said they are taking steps to develop such a plan but had not provided it to us as of February 2025. Implementing this priority recommendation would help ensure that future revenue and expenditures align, could help policymakers understand the relative advantages and drawbacks of the various measures, and may inform legislative and policy decisions.

**Director:** Nagla'a El-Hodiri, International Affairs and Trade

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*Ukraine: Status of Foreign Assistance.* [GAO-24-106884](#). Washington, D.C.: March 28, 2024.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2024

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of the Office of Foreign Assistance and the Comptroller implement improvements to financial systems of record to separately, more systematically and comprehensively track the allocation, obligation, and disbursement of foreign assistance funding provided in response to the crisis in Ukraine, to include base funds allocated to areas outside of Ukraine and exclude supplemental funds that were not allocated in response to the Ukraine crisis.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. In May 2024, State issued guidance on a new reporting category that would identify new allocations in response to the crisis in Ukraine. State has not yet determined how to incorporate the status of allocations prior to May

2024. As of February 2025, State continues to consider ways to automate and improve its tracking of foreign assistance funding provided in response to the crisis in Ukraine.

To fully implement our recommendation, State should develop improvements to financial systems of record for tracking this foreign assistance. Implementing this priority recommendation would improve State's ability to provide essential information on how U.S. agencies have responded to the crisis in Ukraine, ensure the accountability of related funding, and make informed decisions about future resource needs.

**Director:** Latesha Love-Grayer, International Affairs and Trade

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### Complying with Congressional Reporting Requirements

*Foreign Assistance: State Department Should Take Steps to Improve Timeliness of Required Budgetary Reporting.* [GAO-19-600](#). Washington, D.C.: September 9, 2019.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2019

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should ensure that the Director of State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources conducts a review of the Section 653(a) process to identify process steps that can be streamlined or eliminated and determine the time frame needed to prepare the annual Section 653(a) report. If State determines that the time frame exceeds 30 days, the office should coordinate with other appropriate officials to submit a legislative proposal to Congress to extend the mandated time frame for submitting Section 653(a) reports.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. State has provided documentation showing that it reviewed the Section 653(a) process and determined that the time frame needed to prepare the report exceeded 30 days. However, to fully implement this recommendation, State should provide documentation that it submitted a legislative proposal to Congress to extend the mandated time frame for submitting Section 653(a) reports. As of January 2025, we have not received such documentation. By fully implementing this priority recommendation, State could ensure that it meets congressional reporting requirements regarding the allocation of U.S. foreign assistance funds to foreign countries and international organizations.

**Director:** Nagla'a El-Hodiri, International Affairs and Trade

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### Enhancing Training Efforts

*Economic and Commercial Diplomacy: State and Commerce Implement a Range of Activities, but State Should Enhance Its Training Efforts.* [GAO-22-104181](#). Washington, D.C.: December 13, 2021.

**Year Recommendation Made:** 2022

**Recommendation:** The Secretary of State should ensure that the Foreign Service Institute establishes a mechanism to periodically consult with external stakeholders, including the

Department of Commerce, private sector entities, and industry groups, about whether State's training programs in economic and commercial diplomacy are achieving the desired impact.

**Actions Needed:** State agreed with this recommendation. State's Foreign Service Institute and Commerce's International Trade Administration signed a memorandum of understanding that outlines commitments to meet quarterly to discuss relevant training and outreach to external stakeholders, among others. State officials said they have held such meetings in October 2023 and January, May, and July 2024. However, the memorandum does not describe a mechanism through which external stakeholders can consult with State about whether its economic and commercial training programs are achieving the desired impact. As of February 2025, State officials said they continue to have discussions with Commerce and private sector actors to improve training offerings. However, State did not provide documentation to determine whether those interactions include periodic efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

To fully implement our recommendation, State needs to provide documentation showing that it has established a mechanism for periodic consultation with external stakeholders that includes a means of assessing whether its training is achieving the desired impact. Implementing this priority recommendation would provide State reasonable assurance that it has obtained appropriate stakeholder perspectives and feedback on whether it is providing staff the necessary training and competencies to support U.S. businesses overseas.

**Director:** Nagla'a El-Hodiri, International Affairs and Trade

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## Enclosure 2

### Key Information About the Status of GAO Recommendations and Improving Agency Operations

#### Department of State's Recommendation Implementation Rate

In November 2024, we reported that, on a government-wide basis, 70 percent of our recommendations made 4 years ago were implemented.<sup>1</sup> State's recommendation implementation rate was 84 percent. As of March 2025, State had 632 open recommendations.

#### Implemented, Closed, and New Priority Recommendations

Our June 2024 letter to Secretary Blinken and others identified 13 priority recommendations.<sup>2</sup> Since then, two recommendations were implemented, none were closed as no longer valid, and we added two new priority recommendations.

**Implemented recommendations:** In fiscal year 2025, State implemented our recommendation to direct the CIO to implement all components of State's Information Security Continuous Monitoring program across the department, including the continuous diagnostic and mitigation capabilities, in accordance with department policies and federal guidance.<sup>3</sup> By doing so, State should have better knowledge of information security vulnerabilities and threats that could affect mission operations.

In February 2025, State implemented our recommendation to ensure that the Foreign Service Institute develops and implements a process to conduct periodic, comprehensive assessments of training needs across the economic and commercial diplomacy issue area.<sup>4</sup> By doing so, State is better positioned to ensure it is providing personnel with training in economic and commercial diplomacy that is sufficient to address its objectives for supporting U.S. businesses in foreign markets.

**New priority recommendations:** The two new priority recommendations fall into the strengthening foreign assistance monitoring area. (See Enclosure 1.)

#### High-Risk List

In February 2025, we issued our biennial update to our High-Risk List.<sup>5</sup> This list identifies government operations with greater vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.

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<sup>1</sup>GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2024*, [GAO-25-900570](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 2024).

<sup>2</sup>GAO, *Priority Open Recommendations: Department of State*, [GAO-24-107318](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 4, 2024).

<sup>3</sup>GAO, *Cybersecurity: State Needs to Expediently Implement Risk Management and Other Key Practices*, [GAO-23-107012](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2023).

<sup>4</sup>GAO, *Economic and Commercial Diplomacy: State and Commerce Implement a Range of Activities, but State Should Enhance Its Training Efforts*, [GAO-22-104181](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 13, 2021).

<sup>5</sup>GAO, *High-Risk Series: Heightened Attention Could Save Billions More and Improve Government Efficiency and Effectiveness*, [GAO-25-107743](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 25, 2025).

It also identifies the need for transformation to address economy, efficiency, or effectiveness challenges.

Several government-wide, high-risk areas have direct implications for State and its operations. These include [improving management of IT acquisitions and operations](#), [improving strategic human capital management](#) and [personnel security clearance process, managing federal real property](#), and [ensuring the cybersecurity of the nation](#).

We urge your continued attention to the other government-wide, high-risk issues as they relate to State. Progress on high-risk issues has been possible through the concerted actions and efforts of Congress, OMB, and the leadership and staff in agencies, including within State. In March 2022, we issued a report on key practices to successfully address high-risk areas, which can be a helpful resource as your agency continues to make progress to address high-risk issues.<sup>6</sup>

### **Congress's Role on GAO Recommendations**

We also recognize the key role Congress plays in providing oversight and maintaining focus on our recommendations to ensure they are implemented and produce their desired results. Legislation enacted in December 2022 includes a provision for GAO to identify any additional congressional oversight actions that can help agencies implement priority recommendations and address any underlying issues relating to such implementation.<sup>7</sup>

Congress can use various strategies to address our recommendations, such as incorporating them into legislation. Congress can also use its budget, appropriations, and oversight processes to incentivize executive branch agencies to act on our recommendations and monitor their progress. For example, Congress can hold hearings focused on State's progress in implementing GAO's priority recommendations, withhold funds when appropriate, or take other actions to provide incentives for agencies to act. Moreover, Congress can follow up during the appropriations process and request periodic updates.

Congress also plays a key role in addressing any underlying issues related to the implementation of these recommendations. For example, Congress can pass legislation providing an agency explicit authority to implement a recommendation or requiring an agency to take certain actions to implement a recommendation.

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<sup>6</sup>GAO, *High-Risk Series: Key Practices to Successfully Address High-Risk Areas and Remove Them from the List*, [GAO-22-105184](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 3, 2022).

<sup>7</sup>James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, § 7211(a)(2), 136 Stat. 2395, 3668 (2022); H.R. Rep. No. 117-389 (2022) (accompanying Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, H.R. 8237, 117th Cong. (2022)).

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