



Highlights of [GAO-03-582T](#), testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, House Committee on Government Reform

### Why GAO Did This Study

More than 60,000 Americans and foreign nationals work at about 260 diplomatic posts worldwide. Since the mid-1990s, GAO has highlighted the need for State and other federal agencies to establish a systematic process for determining their overseas staffing levels, particularly after the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa. GAO was asked to discuss three reports, including two being issued today, on rightsizing—that is, realigning the number and location of staff—at U.S. embassies and consulates: (1) the rightsizing framework GAO developed last year, (2) follow-on work to further test the framework, and (3) the processes to project staffing levels for new embassy construction and the proposals to share construction costs among U.S. agencies.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OMB expand the use of our rightsizing framework and that State adopt additional measures to ensure that U.S. agencies take a systematic approach to assessing workforce size that considers security, mission, and cost factors. GAO also recommends that State develop guidance on a systematic approach for developing and vetting staffing projections for new diplomatic compounds.

Both OMB and State agreed with GAO’s recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-582T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-582T).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess Ford at (202) 512-4128 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

## OVERSEAS PRESENCE

# Systematic Processes Needed to Rightsize Posts and Guide Embassy Construction

### What GAO Found

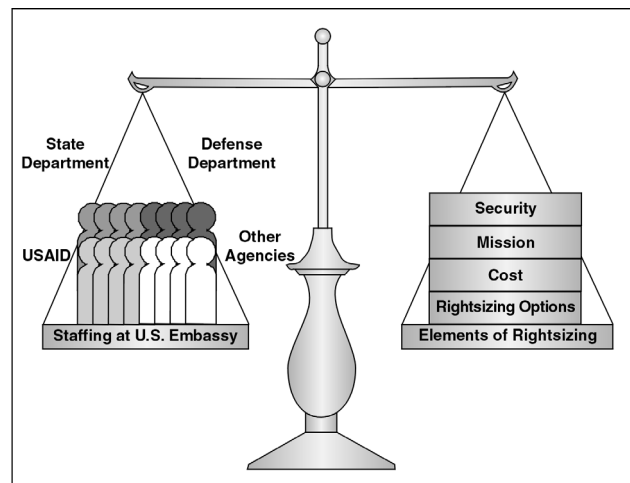
In July 2002, GAO presented a rightsizing framework outlining a systematic approach for assessing overseas workforce size that considers security, mission, and cost. GAO recommended that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) use the framework as part of the administration’s rightsizing initiative, and OMB is now using it to review posts in Europe and Eurasia.

After initially applying the framework at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, GAO further tested it at other U.S. embassies in three developing countries in West Africa to address concerns about whether the framework could be applied uniformly at all posts. GAO’s analysis indicates that the rightsizing framework can be applied at U.S. embassies in developing countries.

GAO also found that U.S. agencies’ staffing projections for new embassy compounds are developed without a systematic approach or comprehensive rightsizing analyses. Moreover, State provides little formal guidance on factors to consider when projecting staffing needs. Further, there is a lack of documentation on projection exercises and factors staff considered when developing projections. Finally, staffing projections are not consistently vetted with all other agencies’ headquarters. These and other deficiencies could lead the government to build wrong-sized buildings.

OMB is leading an interagency committee to develop a cost-sharing mechanism that would provide more discipline when determining overseas staffing needs and encourage agencies to think more carefully before posting staff overseas. Numerous issues will need to be resolved for such a program to be successful, including how to structure the program and how payments will be made.

Assessing Overseas Workforce Size Using GAO’s Rightsizing Framework



Source: GAO.