



Office of Inspector General
U.S. Government Accountability Office

SEMIANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

April 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021



September 2021
OIG-22-1SP



O I G

Office of Inspector General

United States Government Accountability Office

October 29, 2021

To: Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States

From: Mary Arnold Mohiyuddin
Acting Inspector General

Subject: Semiannual Report to Congress—April 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021

This report is being submitted in accordance with Section 5 of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Act of 2008, and summarizes the activities of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the last six months of fiscal year 2021.

During this reporting period, we issued one audit report and continued field work on two performance audits. We closed 15 investigations and 2 self-initiated inquiries, and opened 10 new investigations. We processed 59 hotline complaints, many of which were referred to other OIGs for action because the matters involved were within their jurisdictions. We remained active in the GAO and OIG communities by briefing new GAO employees on our audit and investigative missions and participating in Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency committees and working groups, including those related to the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee. Details of these activities and other OIG accomplishments are provided in the accompanying report.

We post our audit, evaluation, and semiannual reports on [gao.gov](https://www.gao.gov) and [oversight.gov](https://www.oversight.gov), a publicly accessible, text-searchable website containing the latest reports from contributing federal inspectors general. In addition, OIG reports are included in the listing of available updates on GAO's GovDelivery subscription page. We continue to look for innovative ways to enhance our oversight efforts and increase the transparency of our work.

I would like to thank recently retired Inspector General Adam Trzeciak for his service to GAO and the OIG. I am also very grateful to the OIG staff for their continued dedication to our mission and their professionalism. Lastly, I thank you, all Executive Committee members, GAO managers, and staff for the continued cooperation and attention to the important work of our office.

Attachments 2

INTRODUCTION

The United States Government Accountability Office

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent agency in the legislative branch of the federal government. GAO exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and ensure the accountability of the federal government for the benefit of the American people. It supports congressional oversight by (1) auditing agency operations to determine whether federal funds are being spent efficiently and effectively; (2) investigating allegations of illegal and improper activities; (3) reporting on how well government programs and policies are meeting objectives; (4) performing policy analyses and outlining options for congressional consideration; and (5) issuing legal decisions and opinions, such as bid protest rulings and reports on agency rules.

The Office of Inspector General

Established as a statutory office by the Government Accountability Office Act of 2008, GAO's Office of Inspector General (OIG) independently conducts audits, evaluations, and other reviews of GAO programs and operations and makes recommendations to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in GAO. The OIG also investigates allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse, including the possible violation of law or regulation within GAO.

OIG STRATEGIC PUBLICATIONS

Strategic Plan

The OIG's [Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2021-2025](#) identifies the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies for its activities under the authority of the Government Accountability Office Act of 2008, to promote efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity in GAO programs and operations. As discussed in the plan, OIG supports GAO and Congress by helping to protect GAO programs and operations from fraud, waste, and abuse. Independent and objective audits, evaluations, and investigations are the primary methods for assessing GAO programs and operations and identifying risks to GAO, enhancing its ability to protect and maximize its resources.

Biennial Work Plan

The OIG's biennial work plan provides a brief description of audits and other work planned for a 2-year period, and an overview of its investigations program. In addition, the plan sets forth OIG's formal strategy for identifying priority issues and managing its workload and resources.

Top Management Challenges Facing GAO

Each year, OIG is asked to comment on management's assessment and reporting of GAO's challenges for its annual Performance and Accountability Report. OIG work has resulted in improved reporting and transparency of GAO's management challenges and the efforts underway to mitigate the risk these challenges pose to GAO's ability to efficiently and effectively support Congress and the American people. Progress in addressing these challenges is

monitored through the agency's annual performance and accountability process and OIG audits and evaluations.

For fiscal year 2021, GAO identified management challenges in (1) its continued response to the pandemic, (2) maintaining its operations, and (3) improving the efficiency of its engagements. OIG identified infrastructure management as another challenge area, highlighting space, occupancy, and other issues that coincide with leasing arrangements particular to GAO at its Washington, D.C., headquarters building. OIG will continue to monitor these challenges particularly as the agency navigates its operating posture going forward.

Semiannual Reports to Congress

GAO OIG's [Semiannual Reports to Congress](#) describe OIG's work on identifying problems, abuses, deficiencies, remedies, and investigative outcomes relating to the administration of GAO programs and operations that were disclosed during the reporting period. This semiannual report presents the results of OIG's work for the period April 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021, including product and performance statistics for audits and investigations. It also provides an overview of each audit report issued, investigation closed, and, as appropriate, actions GAO took or initiated in response to those reports, as of the end of the reporting period.

ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

GAO and OIG management work cooperatively in fulfilling the role of the OIG. There were no attempts by GAO to resist, object to, or interfere with OIG independence or delay OIG access to information during the reporting period.

During the period, OIG issued an audit report ([OIG-21-2](#)) that did not contain any recommendations. Table 1 provides fiscal year summary statistics for open OIG recommendations as of September 30, 2021, presented in more detail in Table 3.

Table 1: Fiscal Year Summary Statistics Related to Open Recommendations as of September 30, 2021

| Fiscal Year | Number of Reports with Open Recommendations | Number of Open Recommendations |
|--------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 2021 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 1 | 1 |

Source: OIG assessment as of September 30, 2021. | OIG-22-1SP

Audits and Evaluations

All OIG audit and evaluation reports, with the exception of reports on GAO's implementation of the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014 (FISMA), are fully disclosed to the public. Due to the sensitive nature of issues identified, generally only summary pages of the FISMA report are made publicly available.

OIG Audit Reports, Status of Current Period Recommendations, and Other Work

During the last 6 months of fiscal year 2021, OIG issued one audit report on GAO's compliance with the Digital Accountability and Transparency (DATA) Act of 2014, and continued field work on GAO's:

- Debt Collection Program. The audit objective is to assess the extent to which GAO has established effective internal control to collect debts owed to the agency by employees.
- Information Security Program. OIG will assess agency security policies and practices consistent with FISMA and industry best practices.

Table 2 describes the OIG Report issued during the reporting period, and the report's objective. The report did not contain any recommendations, and attachment II also provides a brief report summary. OIG reports are available at [gao.gov](https://www.gao.gov) and [oversight.gov](https://www.oversight.gov).

Table 2: Status of Agency Actions on OIG Audit Reports Issued in the Current Reporting Period (April 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021)

| OIG Reports | Audit Objective | Number of Recommendations | Status of Recommendations |
|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>DATA Act: Audit of GAO's Fiscal Year 2020, Fourth Quarter, DATA Act Submission, OIG-21-2 (September 29, 2021)</i> | To assess the completeness, accuracy, timeliness, and quality of the financial and payment data submitted by GAO for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2020 for publication on USASpending.gov, and GAO's implementation and use of government-wide financial data standards established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of the Treasury (Treasury). | None | Not Applicable |

Source: OIG assessment as of September 30, 2021. | OIG-22-1SP

Status of Prior Period Open OIG Audit Recommendations

At the end of the prior reporting period (March 31, 2021), there were five open recommendations from two OIG audit reports. Table 3 summarizes the status of actions planned or taken in response to recommendations made in prior reporting periods, as of September 30, 2021.

Table 3: Status of Agency Actions on Prior Period Open Recommendations as of September 30, 2021

| OIG reports | Recommendations | Status of actions planned or taken by GAO in response to the recommendations |
|--|---|--|
| INFORMATION SECURITY: Review of GAO's Program and Practices for Fiscal Year 2018 OIG-19-3 (September 30, 2019) | Take steps to ensure that identified vulnerabilities are remediated within prescribed time frames. | Recommendation: Closed / Unimplemented GAO has assessed the risk of exploitation from outstanding vulnerabilities as low and has chosen to accept that risk, however it acknowledges that timely vulnerability remediation remains a challenge. |
| | Ensure that baseline configurations for all identified environments have been documented and approved. | Recommendation: Closed / Implemented GAO has made significant progress in ensuring that baseline configurations for identified environments are documented and approved, with a small percentage in progress or in review at the end of fiscal year 2021. |
| | Ensure that contingency planning testing accurately reflects GAO's ability to recover mission critical systems in the event of a disaster. | Recommendation: Closed / Implemented GAO has conducted periodic contingency plan testing that demonstrates its ability to recover mission critical systems. |
| | Complete business impact analysis for IT systems and update contingency plans where necessary to ensure that business needs are met in the event of a disaster. | Recommendation: Closed / Implemented GAO has updated its contingency plan for IT systems to include a business impact analysis to ensure that business needs are met in the event of a disaster. |
| New Blue: Additional Efforts Could Improve Project Management Efficiency, OIG-21-1 (January 26, 2021) | Review and update procedures to ensure that a) schedule practices address all key project components; project schedules are baselined and appropriate risk analyses are performed; b) cost estimates fully meet best practices for comprehensiveness, accuracy, and credibility; and c) all project requirements are tracked and managed. | Recommendation: Open GAO is reviewing and revising its schedule and cost practices as well as identifying and incorporating requirements for tracking and traceability methods. It has documented a schedule aimed at fully addressing these best practices in a multi-phased effort, with a goal towards full implementation across all major and medium projects by the end of fiscal year 2022. |

Source: OIG assessment as of September 30, 2021. | OIG-22-1SP

Complaints and Investigations

The OIG hotline is the primary source of complaints or information for identifying suspected fraud and other problems, abuses, and deficiencies relating to the administration of GAO's programs and operations. As shown in Table 4 on the following page, OIG processed 59 substantive hotline complaints during this 6-month reporting period.

Table 4: Summary of OIG Hotline Complaint Activity, April 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Hotline complaints open at the start of the reporting period | 7 |
| New hotline complaints received this reporting period ^a | 52 |
| Total hotline complaints | 59 |
| Complaints closed (referred to other GAO offices) | 7 |
| Complaints closed (referred to FraudNet ^a) | 2 |
| Complaints closed (referred to Office of Audit within GAO OIG) | 0 |
| Complaints closed (no jurisdiction and referred by the GAO OIG to appropriate agency OIG or other law enforcement offices ^b) | 39 |
| Complaints converted to investigations | 10 |
| Total hotline complaints open at the end of the reporting period | 1 |

Source: OIG hotline summary statistics as of September 30, 2021. | OIG-22-1SP

^aFraudNet is a government-wide hotline operated by GAO staff on its Forensic Audits and Investigative Service team that receives complaints of fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement of federal funds.

^bFraudNet was provided a copy of each referral made to federal entities outside of GAO.

In addition to the 59 hotline complaints shown in Table 4, OIG received 305 complaints that were closed due to insufficient information or no basis for opening an investigation. These complaints generally did not involve GAO programs and operations, and lacked either (1) sufficient merit to warrant direct OIG referral to another federal or state organization, or (2) actionable information.

As shown in Table 5, there were 23 open investigations during this reporting period. At the end of the reporting period, 8 investigations remained open.

Table 5: Summary of OIG Investigations, April 1, 2021, through September 30, 2021

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Investigations open at the start of the reporting period | 13 |
| New investigations initiated this reporting period | 10 |
| Total investigations | 23 |
| Investigations closed this reporting period | 15 |
| Total investigations open at the end of the reporting period | 8 |
| Total investigative reports issued during the reporting period | 6 |
| Referred to Department of Justice | 0 |
| Referred to state/local prosecutor | 0 |
| Total referrals for criminal prosecution | 0 |
| Total indictments/information obtained during reporting period | 0 |

Source: OIG investigative activity statistics as of September 30, 2021. | OIG-22-1SP

Significant Investigations

Bank Fraud

As reported previously, a GAO analyst was arrested and subsequently resigned from GAO after an OIG investigation into credit card fraud. On May 6, 2021, the former analyst pled guilty to two counts of wire fraud and was sentenced to 30 days in prison in addition to 3 years of supervised release. The former analyst was also required to pay a \$200 special assessment and approximately \$6,600 in restitution. On August 9, 2021, the OIG closed the investigation. (G-17-0163-O)

Improper Handling of Sensitive Documents

On May 17, 2021, the OIG opened an investigation regarding a senior analyst who failed to safeguard sensitive documents. The OIG substantiated the allegation and found that the analyst sent numerous engagement and administrative sensitive documents to their personal email account without password protection, and used a public file sharing website to effect certain file transfers. The analyst admitted to failing to safeguard sensitive GAO documents. The OIG issued a Report of Investigation (ROI) on June 15, 2021. In response, the Human Capital Office (HCO) notified the OIG that the analyst was counseled by management.

The OIG also issued a memorandum to management on July 7, 2021, regarding concerns over GAO employees sending non-password-protected sensitive documents to personal email accounts. GAO distributed a reminder notice to all employees about protecting engagement-sensitive information. On September 29, 2021, the OIG closed the investigation. This investigation was not previously disclosed publicly. (G-21-0302-O)

Improper Approval or Use of Alternate Work Sites

The OIG has three open investigations involving improper approval or use of alternate work sites by senior government employees (SGEs). In each of the three cases, an employee worked from a location outside the United States, which is against GAO policy. In reviewing and approving telework arrangements, GAO defines an alternate work site as a home or other approved satellite work location in the United States other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work. All three investigations listed below remain open pending responses from GAO and were not disclosed previously.

- The OIG issued an ROI on August 30, 2021. (G-21-0473-O)
- The OIG issued an ROI on September 15, 2021. (G-21-0462-O)
- The OIG issued an ROI on September 22, 2021. (G-21-0403-O)

Other Investigations

In addition to the two investigations identified as closed above, OIG closed 13 investigations during the period, none of which were previously disclosed publicly. A summary of nine investigations that were not previously disclosed publicly is provided in Table 6 on the following page. The OIG also closed four separate investigations into potential telework abuse. In each

case, the OIG was unable to substantiate that the employees were inappropriately claiming work time. (G-21-0243-P, G-21-0244-P, G-21-0274-P, and G-21-0404-P)

Table 6: Closed Investigations Not Previously Disclosed Publicly, April 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021

| Subject | Results | Completed |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Employee Misconduct The OIG received several hotline complaints alleging improper contracting practices and other misconduct on the part of an employee. (G-18-0191-HL-O) | The OIG conducted an administrative investigation into the various allegations. The employee resigned prior to completion of the investigation, which was subsequently closed. | September 29, 2021 |
| 2. Fake GAO Website The OIG received an allegation about a third-party website purporting to be an official GAO website. (G-20-0015-O) | The OIG conducted an investigation and obtained information on the website address owner and host. During the course of the investigation, the website was shut down. OIG closed the investigation with no further action. | May 27, 2021 |
| 3. False Timecards OIG received an allegation that an employee on expanded telework was not meeting their official duty station requirements. (G-20-0020-O) | The OIG learned that the employee was counseled by their supervisor and no longer eligible to telework. Soon after, GAO moved to a maximum telework environment due to the pandemic. OIG closed the investigation with no further action. | June 3, 2021 |
| 4. Alleged Bias The OIG received an anonymous complaint questioning the timing and content of GAO's appropriation decision on the matter of OMB withholding funds for security assistance to Ukraine. (G-20-0096-HL-P) | The OIG did not substantiate the allegation. | September 14, 2021 |
| 5. Falsified Leave and Earnings Statements The OIG received an external referral involving a variety of allegations against a GAO employee, including one that involving falsified leave and earnings statements to obtain rental housing. (G-20-0112-O) | The OIG was unable to substantiate the majority of the allegations. However, the OIG did substantiate the allegation involving falsified leave and earnings statements to obtain rental housing. The OIG issued an ROI on June 7, 2021. GAO completed a suitability determination and found the employee to be suitable for their position. The investigation was closed. | August 4, 2021 |
| 6. Hostile Work Environment The OIG received an anonymous complaint that senior management created a hostile work environment and that a supervisor had asked an employee to conduct work for an external company. (G-21-0003-P) | The OIG does not have jurisdiction over hostile work environment claims and therefore contacted GAO's Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness (O&I). The OIG did not substantiate the allegation regarding work for an external company. | April 29, 2021 |

| Subject | Results | Completed |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| 7. Alleged Misuse of GAO Network The OIG received a hotline complaint that a GAO employee allowed unauthorized users to access their GAO email account and GAO equipment. (G-21-0012-HL) | The OIG did not substantiate the allegation. | April 21, 2021 |
| 8. Unnecessary Office Suite Redesign The OIG received an anonymous complaint that GAO funds were spent unnecessarily to redesign an office suite at GAO headquarters. (G-21-0111-P) | The OIG did not substantiate the allegation. | August 16, 2021 |
| 9. Personal Use of GAO Equipment and Affiliation The OIG received a complaint alleging that an employee used official GAO email to send a harassing message involving a personal matter. (G-21-0124-O) | The OIG determined that the employee was attempting to use their affiliation with GAO to intimidate a personal email message recipient. The OIG issued an ROI on June 24, 2021. The employee received a letter of counseling on August 11, 2021, and the investigation was subsequently closed. | September 14, 2021 |

Source: OIG investigative activity statistics as of September 30, 2021. | OIG-22-1SP

Proactive Inquiries

OIG has continued proactive inquiries based on traditional areas of vulnerability that cut across agencies and core administrative functions. These inquiries focus on data analysis, looking for outliers or exceptions that require targeted investigative methods such as subject or witness interviews.

During this period, OIG closed two proactive inquiries. The first inquiry focused on a comparison of employee timecards to network login records for selected dates. The OIG opened five investigations based on this inquiry; however, none substantiated timecard fraud. One investigation remains open involving improper use and approval of an alternate work site, a separate matter identified during the course of the investigation. The second inquiry involved working with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force to identify whether GAO Internet Protocol (IP) addresses were used to access illegal information, and did not result in any investigations.

Ongoing Matters Referred for Prosecution

During the period, OIG continued to lead a task force involving a phishing attempt to divert the paychecks of several senior GAO, executive branch, and state agency officials to fraudulent bank accounts. The task force includes the OIGs for the Federal Housing Finance Agency, Department of Energy, National Archives and Records Administration, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Other task force members include the Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Maryland State Police. The task force is working with the District of Columbia's U.S. Attorney's Office to develop the case for prosecution. (G-19-0077-O)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Activities within GAO

OIG leadership continued its discussion of the duties, responsibilities, and authorities of the OIG with participants in GAO's new employee orientation program. In addition, OIG leadership attended weekly senior staff meetings and met periodically with the Audit Advisory Committee and staff of the independent public accounting firm conducting GAO's annual financial statement audit.

Activities within the Inspector General Community

OIG has participated with and responded to requests for information from the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC), established by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.¹ OIG also took part in monthly meetings of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Accountability Work Group, organized by the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers, and Treasurers, along with PRAC members and other federal IGs.

OIG continued to participate on the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), a council of federal inspectors general that promotes collaboration on issues of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness that transcend individual agencies. OIG leadership regularly participated in monthly CIGIE meetings and periodic meetings with other OIGs designed to address issues common to smaller OIGs. The Assistant Inspector General for Audits participated in periodic CIGIE Audit Committee meetings. The Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (AIGI) participated in monthly CIGIE Investigations Committee meetings, quarterly AIGI meetings, and various investigative working groups. The Counsel to the Inspector General participated in monthly CIGIE Legislation Committee meetings and Council of Counsels to Inspectors General (CCIG) meetings, and conducted training for CIGIE's Inspector General Criminal Investigator Academy.

Audit Peer Review Activities

Government Auditing Standards require that each organization performing its audits in accordance with these standards undergo an external peer review. The objectives of a peer review are to determine whether an effective quality control system has been established and if the organization is following its policies, procedures, and applicable government auditing standards. Peer reviews of OIGs must be performed at least once every 3 years by reviewers independent of the audit organization under review. The reviews are conducted in accordance with guidelines established by CIGIE. Audit organizations can receive a review of pass, pass with deficiencies, or fail.

In September 2021, the GAO OIG received the results of its most recent audit peer review, which was conducted by the Architect of the Capitol OIG for the period ending March 31, 2021, receiving a rating of "pass." A copy of the peer review report is posted at gao.gov/ig. The next peer review is expected in 2024. In August 2021, GAO OIG completed a peer review of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) OIG, the results of which are publicly available on the FTC OIG website.

¹Public Law 116-136.

Freedom of Information

During the current reporting period, OIG received two requests for information under GAO's access regulation, 4 C.F.R. Part 81, and processed one administrative appeal.

Whistleblower Retaliation

The GAO OIG has no statutory authority to investigate allegations of whistleblower retaliation. Although GAO is not subject to the Whistleblower Protection Act or the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act, GAO personnel management system controls are intended to protect GAO employees from prohibited personnel practices.

DATA Act: Audit of GAO's Fiscal Year 2020, Fourth Quarter, DATA Act Submission OIG-21-2 (September 29, 2021)

The DATA Act requires federal agencies to report their spending data via USASpending.gov to make it more transparent to the public. The OIG contracted with independent public accounting firm, Williams Adley, to (1) assess the completeness, accuracy, timeliness, and quality of the financial and payment data for the fourth quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2020 submitted by GAO for publication on USASpending.gov, and (2) its implementation and use of government-wide financial data standards established by OMB and Treasury.

The audit found that GAO's data submitted for the fourth quarter of FY 2020 was accurate, timely, complete, and of excellent quality. Further, GAO adhered to the data standards established by OMB and Treasury. The report did not contain any recommendations.

OIG Mission

Our mission is to protect GAO's integrity through audits, investigations, and other work focused on promoting the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in GAO programs and operations, and to keep the Comptroller General and Congress informed of fraud and other serious problems relating to the administration of GAO programs and operations.

Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in GAO's Internal Operations

To report fraud and other serious problems, abuses, and deficiencies relating to GAO programs and operations, you can do one of the following (anonymously, if you choose):

- Call toll-free (866) 680-7963 to speak with a hotline specialist, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Visit <https://OIG.alertline.com>.

Obtaining Copies of OIG Reports and Testimonies

To obtain copies of OIG reports and testimonies, go to GAO's website: <https://www.gao.gov/ig/> or <https://www.oversight.gov/reports>, created by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

