

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

September 12, 2016

The Honorable Beth F. Cobert
Acting Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20415-1000

Dear Ms. Cobert:

The Committee recently received a copy of a letter to you from the Comptroller General regarding the overall status of the Office of Personnel Management's implementation of Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations.¹ According to the letter, the Comptroller General wrote to "call your continued personal attention to areas where open recommendations should be given high priority."²

While OPM has addressed many of GAO's recommendations, 56 recommendations remain outstanding, including recommendations related to information security. The Comptroller General also added three priority recommendations related to strengthening controls for high-impact information technology (IT) systems.³

Information security is a national security priority, and the importance of protecting personal and sensitive data stored by OPM and its contractors is paramount. The Committee recently released a majority staff report that contained findings from a year-long investigation into how OPM lost personnel files, security clearance background investigation information, and fingerprint data for more than 22 million Americans.⁴

With that in mind, I have questions about OPM's progress with respect to the outstanding recommendations highlighted in the Comptroller General's recent letter. Specifically, the letter described an outstanding recommendation from GAO's August 2014 report, "Strengthening

¹ Letter from Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General of the U.S., to Beth F. Cobert, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management (July 20, 2106).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* The letter states that since the Comptroller General's August 2015 letter to Acting Director Cobert outlining 14 priority recommendations, OPM has implemented five, and that it is adding three additional high priority recommendations related to IT security.

⁴ H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't Reform, Majority Staff Report: *THE OPM DATA BREACH: HOW THE GOVERNMENT JEOPARDIZED OUR NATIONAL SECURITY FOR MORE THAN A DECADE*, 114th Cong. (Sept. 7, 2016).

Security of Contractor-Operated Information Systems.”⁵ In this report, GAO recommended “the Director of the Office of Personnel Management should develop, document, and implement oversight procedures for ensuring that a system test is fully executed for each contractor-operated system” in order to “ensure that the privacy and security controls of contractor-operated systems are being properly overseen.”⁶ According to the GAO, two years later, as of August 2016, OPM had not implemented the recommendation and was still reviewing its policies and procedures to further enhance oversight of contractor-operated systems.⁷

The Comptroller General’s letter also pointed out that a May 2016 report made three high-priority recommendations to OPM: (1) update security plans to ensure controls specific to high impact systems are addressed; (2) provide and track training for individuals with significant security responsibilities; and (3) ensure security control assessments specific to high impact systems are comprehensive. More than three months later, however, these recommendations remain outstanding. In addition, while the Comptroller General highlighted that OPM does not fully agree with its recommendations, he contends that “[b]ecause of [the high impact systems’] importance to ensuring personally identifiable information is protected and our national IT systems are secure, we maintain that the areas where OPM partially agreed and disagreed should be fully addressed.”⁸

Please provide the Committee with an update on the status of these recommendations, an explanation for the delay in implementing each one referenced in the Comptroller General’s letter, and a date by which the Committee can expect to see each recommendation closed. Please provide this response as soon as possible, but by no later than 5:00 p.m. on September 26, 2016.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal investigative committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. Pursuant to House Rule X, the Committee has authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time.”

When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

⁵ U.S. Gov’t Accountability Office report, “Strengthening Security of Contractor-Operated Information Systems” (Aug. 2014) (GAO-14-612); *see also* GAO Recommendations Database, *available at* http://www.gao.gov/recommendations/search?searched=1&hide_order_by_block=1&expand=&openrecs=&rows=10&now_sort=score+desc&page_name=main&q=GAO-14-612&field=rptno_ts (last accessed Sept. 8, 2016).

⁶ Letter from Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General of the U.S., to Beth F. Cobert, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management (July 20, 2106).

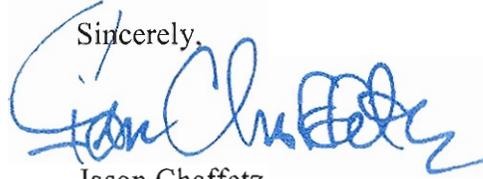
⁷ *See*, GAO Recommendations Database, http://www.gao.gov/recommendations/search?searched=1&hide_order_by_block=1&expand=&openrecs=&rows=10&now_sort=score+desc&page_name=main&q=GAO-14-612&field=rptno_ts (last accessed Sept. 8, 2016).

⁸ Letter from Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General of the U.S., to Beth F. Cobert, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management (July 20, 2106).

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Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Katie Bailey of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Minority Member