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U.S. Government
Accountability Office (GAO)

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Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO provided information on President Clinton's 1998 trips to Africa, Chile, and China, focusing on: (1) the estimated costs and the nature of the costs of these trips; and (2) executive branch accounting procedures for such expenses. GAO noted that: (1) presidential travel to foreign destinations requires

planning, coordination, and logistical and personnel support; (2) the estimated incremental costs of President Clinton's trips to Africa, Chile, and China were at least \$42.8 million, \$10.5 million, and \$18.8 million, respectively; (3) the largest of these costs consisted of: (a) operating expenses of the President's aircraft and other military passenger and cargo aircraft; (b) travel expenses, including lodging for the travellers; and (c) telecommunications, vehicle, and other equipment rentals and procurement in the countries visited; (4) these estimates exclude: (a) Secret Service expenses, which are classified; (b) regular salaries and benefits of U.S. government civil and military travellers; and (c) agency planning expenses that may have been incurred in preparing to travel; (5) the executive branch does not have a single system to account for the cost of presidential travel overseas, and the agencies involved use a variety of means to account for expenses; (6) the Department of State routinely accounts for travel, equipment rental, and other costs to support presidential travel; and (7) other agencies that incurred costs in support of the Africa, Chile, and China trips had records available on their costs as well.