

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The armed takeover of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in early 2016 lasted more than 41 days. The perpetrators, several of whom have already been convicted of a range of offenses, caused millions of dollars in damage to public buildings and structures and did considerable harm to important environmental and archeological resources. Unfortunately, while the events at Malheur may have been unusually public, they were not an isolated incident.

Many of the Malheur plotters are affiliated with a broader anti-government movement that, for decades, has targeted federal facilities and employees throughout the Western United States. This movement includes hundreds of militias and other groups violently opposed to federal ownership and management of lands in the West. Broadly speaking, this movement views the federal government as the enemy and does not respect the laws of this country.

Federal agencies have not always swiftly responded to these groups' threats, attacks and open provocations. As recent research by my staff has suggested, federal land management agencies – including the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – do not consistently track, catalogue or respond to violent threats or attacks on their employees or public property.

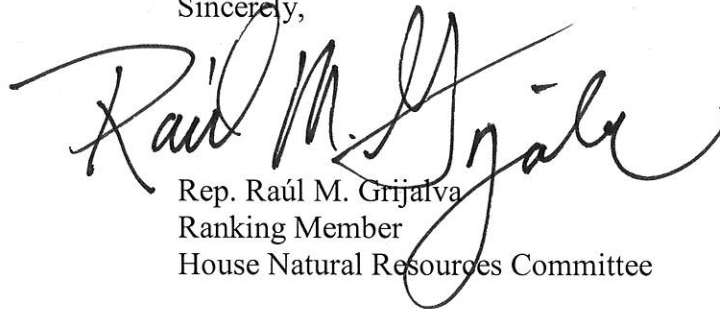
I request that GAO examine the efforts of federal land management agencies to address the threats posed by anti-government extremism. In particular, I would like GAO to determine, to the extent possible:

1. What actions have NPS, FWS, BLM and USFS taken to track, assess, and protect against security threats to their facilities and employees, including but not limited to those in rural and remote locations?
2. To what extent do these actions conform with applicable federal policies, agency guidance, and key practices?

3. In the past decade, at each of these four agencies, what type and number of credible threats or attacks have been made against agency personnel (including employees and contractors) and against federal property?
4. For each agency, what is the cost of intentional damage done to federal property over that time period? What portion of those costs were ultimately covered or paid by taxpayers?
5. What challenges do federal land management agencies face in addressing these security threats? How could tracking of this information be improved, and how should agencies use it to improve security for their employees and the public assets they protect?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. Please direct questions to Adam Sarvana at (202) 225-6065 or adam.sarvana@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee