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HOMELAND SECURITY

Key Elements to Unify Efforts Are Underway but Uncertainty Remains



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G A O

Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

June 7, 2002

Congressional Requesters

The issue of homeland security crosscuts numerous policy domains, impinging on the expertise and resources of every level of government, the private sector, and the international community. We have previously reported that while combating terrorism crossed organizational boundaries, it did not sufficiently coordinate the activities of the more than 40 federal entities involved, resulting in duplication and gaps in coverage.¹ Effectively integrating homeland security efforts will involve organizations at all levels of government and in the private sector. Consequently, in response to requests in May and July 2001 from 8 members of Congress acting in their capacities as subcommittee chairmen, ranking minority members, or other members of Congress, we examined the extent to which homeland security efforts to date represent a unified approach.

To determine the extent to which homeland security efforts are unified, we reviewed documents and interviewed officials from 12 key federal agencies, associations representing selected state and local government officials, research organizations recognized for their work on terrorism or homeland security or both, and selected associations representing corporations that own key infrastructure. We also examined related crosscutting issues—our work on combating terrorism, the year-2000 (Y2K) challenge, and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993—to identify key elements, such as central leadership and a clearly defined strategy, that are critical to unifying efforts and that could be instructive in developing homeland security approaches. Further information on our scope and methodology appears in appendix I.

Results in Brief

The homeland security efforts of public and private entities do not yet represent a unified approach, although key supporting elements for such an approach are emerging. Due to uncertainty about national priorities, roles, responsibilities, and funding, both public and private sector organizations either embarked on their own initiatives without assurance

¹ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations*. GAO-01-822 (Washington, D.C.: September 2001).

that these actions support the overall effort or are waiting for further guidance before undertaking new initiatives of a substantial nature. For example, some federal agencies such as the Coast Guard and the Customs Service reallocated assets to contribute to homeland security efforts, depleting resources for their other regular missions. State and local governments want to know how they can contribute beyond their traditional mission of managing the consequences of an incident.

- Progress has been made in developing a framework to support a more unified effort. A key element—central leadership—was established by Executive Order 13228, which created the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council. Establishment of such an office was generally consistent with a prior recommendation that we had made, although we had also recommended that the office be institutionalized in law and that the head of the office be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The new office is to coordinate the homeland security efforts of federal, state, and local governments and private sector entities.
- Other remaining key elements—a national strategy, establishment of public and private sector partnerships, and the definition of key terms—are either not in place yet or are evolving. The national strategy for homeland security is being prepared by the Office of Homeland Security and is to identify long-term, national priorities; objectives; performance measures; and organizational responsibilities. Intergovernmental and public-private sector relationships—which were key to the success of the Y2K effort—are also emerging. For example, the President established the Homeland Security Advisory Council with members selected from the private sector, academia, professional service associations, state and local governments, and other areas. However, there has not been enough time for these public-private relationships to meld into a unified approach, and the national strategy, which could guide these efforts, is still under development.
- At the same time, key terms, such as “homeland security,” have not been officially defined; consequently, certain organizational, management, and budgetary decisions cannot currently be made consistently across agencies.

In the interim, the potential exists for an uncoordinated approach to homeland security that may lead to duplication of efforts or gaps in coverage, misallocation of resources, and inadequate monitoring of expenditures.

Since the national strategy and public-private sector partnerships are developing and actions are underway to address most key issues requiring immediate attention, we are making no recommendations concerning these areas at this time. However, during the time of our review, we could not determine if the Office of Homeland Security planned to define “homeland security.” Consequently, we are recommending that (1) the term be defined and (2) that the definition be included in the national strategy.

We provided a draft of this report to the Office of Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Customs Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Justice, Transportation, and the Treasury. Only the Departments of Justice, Defense, and Health and Human Services and the Customs Service provided written comments on a draft of this report. The Department of Justice concurred with the recommendation to define the term “homeland security” and formalize it by including it in the national strategy. In addition, the Departments of Justice, Defense, and Health and Human Services provided technical comments that we incorporated as appropriate.

Background

The success of crosscutting, multi-organizational efforts depends on certain key concepts to meld organizational efforts. These include central leadership, an overarching strategy, effective partnerships, and common definitions. These are critical elements that underpin the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993² or were shown as critical in our related work on combating terrorism efforts and the successful resolution of Y2K computer problems. In March 2002, we testified about these elements in terms of promoting partnerships in the development of a national strategy for homeland security.³

We have previously reported that the general tenets embraced by the Results Act provide agencies with a systematic approach for managing programs. The Results Act principles include clarifying missions, developing a strategy, identifying goals and objectives, and establishing

² P.L. 103-62 (August 3, 1993).

³ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Homeland Security: Progress Made, More Direction and Partnership Sought*. [GAO-02-490T](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 2002).

performance measures. When participants in a crosscutting program understand how their missions contribute to a common strategy, they can develop goals and objectives and implementation plans to reinforce each other's efforts and avoid duplicating or inadvertently obstructing them. Moreover, a uniformly rigorous approach to assessing performance can enable the Executive Branch and the Congress to identify programs that are not operating as intended and target corrections as needed.

Our work on combating terrorism indicated that without central leadership and an overarching strategy that identifies goals and objectives, priorities, measurable outcomes, and state and local government roles, the efforts of the more than 40 federal entities and numerous state and local governments were fragmented. Specifically, we found that key interagency functions in combating terrorism resided in several different organizations and that this redundancy led to duplication of effort. We reported that state and local officials have expressed concerns about duplication and overlap among federal programs for training about weapons of mass destruction and related matters. Some officials said that the number of federal organizations involved created confusion concerning who was in charge. As we noted in our September 2001 report on combating terrorism, a representative of the International Association of Fire Chiefs testified similarly that efforts would benefit greatly from an increased level of coordination and accountability. Our work also showed that common definitions promote effective agency and intergovernmental operations and permit more accurate monitoring of expenditures at all levels of government.

Effective partnerships are also key in crosscutting efforts. In the Y2K effort, for example, the issues involved went beyond the federal government to state and local governments and to key economic sectors, such as financial services, power distribution, and telecommunications. A failure in any one area could have affected others, or critical services could have been disrupted. Thus, the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion established more than 25 working groups drawn from different economic sectors and initiated numerous outreach activities to obtain the perspectives of those involved on crosscutting issues, information sharing, and the appropriate federal response.

Lastly, in March 2002, we testified on the need for a national strategy to improve national preparedness and enhance partnerships among federal,

state, and local governments to guard against terrorist attacks.⁴ This strategy should clarify the appropriate roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local entities and establish goals and performance measures to guide the nation's preparedness efforts.

A Unified Homeland Security Approach Is Emerging

Homeland security is a priority among public and private sector entities, but their efforts are not fully unified. Federal agencies are undertaking homeland security initiatives, but without the national strategy cannot know how the initiatives will support overarching goals and other agencies. Some state and local governments and private sector entities are waiting for further guidance on national priorities, roles and responsibilities, and funding before they take certain additional action. A key step toward a more unified approach was achieved in October 2001 with Executive Order 13228, when the President established a single focal point to coordinate efforts against terrorism in the United States—the Office of Homeland Security. The national strategy is under development, and partnerships among federal, state, and local governments and the private sector are evolving. However, the federal government does not yet have commonly accepted and authoritative definitions for key terms, such as homeland security.

Uncertainties Impair the Ability of the Public and Private Sectors to Unify Efforts

Public and private sector entities have been either pursuing their own homeland security initiatives without assurance that these actions will support the overall effort, or they have been waiting for further guidance before undertaking certain new initiatives. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard has realigned some resources to enhance port security, drawing them from maritime safety, drug interdiction, and fisheries law enforcement.⁵ Similarly, the Customs Service has used approximately 1,500 personnel since September 11 in support of the Federal Aviation Administration's Air Marshal program and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Forces; Customs Service aircraft and crews were assigned to assist the North American Aerospace Defense Command; and the Customs Service also undertook other initiatives to

⁴ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Intergovernmental Partnership in a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness*, [GAO-02-547T](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 22, 2002).

⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Coast Guard: Budget and Management Challenges for 2003 and Beyond* [GAO-02-538T](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 19, 2002).

bolster homeland security. The Department of Defense has initiated two major operations. Operation Enduring Freedom is a combat mission conducted overseas in direct pursuit of terrorists and their supporters, while Operation Noble Eagle concerns increased security required for the nation's homeland. To help accomplish these new efforts, the department has recommended and been authorized to create a new unified command—the Northern Command—to lead all of the department's military homeland security missions and activated almost 82,000 Reserve and National Guard service members for participation in these operations. The Department of Transportation in response to legislation established the Transportation Security Administration and is in the process of hiring over 30,000 baggage screeners at airports across the United States. In addition, the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have received significant new funding to support its homeland security programs. At the same time, officials from these agencies as well as associations of state officials stated that they were waiting for the Office of Homeland Security to provide a vision and strategy for homeland security and to clarify additional organizational responsibilities. Certain state officials said that they are uncertain about additional roles for state and local governments as well as how they can proceed beyond their traditional mission of managing the consequences of an incident or providing for public health and safety.

Uncertainty about funding may also impede a unified approach to homeland security. At the time of our report, officials representing state and local governments as well as the private sector believed they were unable to absorb new homeland security costs. The National Governor's Association estimated fiscal year 2002 state budget short falls of between \$40 billion and \$50 billion, making it difficult for the states to take on new initiatives without federal assistance. Similarly, representatives from associations representing the banking, electrical energy, and transportation sectors told us that member companies were concerned about the cost of additional layers of security. For example, according to National Industrial Transportation League officials, transport companies and their customers are willing to adopt prudent security measures (such as increased security checks in loading areas and security checks for carrier drivers), but are concerned about the impact and cost of new regulations to enhance security on their ability to conduct business. At the same time, the North American Electric Reliability Council officials told us that utility companies need a way to recoup expenses incurred in protecting facilities the federal government deems critical to homeland security.

As we have testified, our previous work on federal programs suggests that the choice and design of policy tools have important consequences for performance and accountability.⁶ Governments have a variety of policy tools including grants, regulations, tax incentives, and regional coordination and partnerships to motivate or mandate other levels of government or the private sector to address security concerns. Key to the national effort will be determining the appropriate level of funding in order that policies and tools can be designed and targeted to elicit a prompt, adequate, and sustainable response while protecting against federal funding being used as a substitute for state, local, or private sector funding that would have occurred without federal assistance.

Inadequate intelligence and sensitive information sharing have also been cited as impediments to participation in homeland security efforts. Currently, no standard protocol exists for sharing intelligence and other sensitive information among federal, state, and local officials. Associations of state officials believe that intelligence sharing has been insufficient to allow them to effectively meet their responsibilities. According to a National Emergency Management Association official, both state and local emergency management personnel have not received intelligence information, hampering their ability to interdict terrorists before they strike. According to this official, certain state and local emergency management personnel, emergency management directors, and fire and police chiefs hold security clearances granted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency; however, these clearances are not recognized by other federal agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The National Governors' Association agreed that inadequate intelligence-sharing is a problem between federal agencies and the states. The association explained that most governors do not have security clearances and, therefore, do not receive classified threat information, potentially undermining their ability to use the National Guard to prevent an incident and hampering their emergency preparedness capabilities to respond to an incident. On the other hand, the Federal Bureau of Investigation believes that it has shared information with state or local officials when appropriate. For example, field offices in most states have a good relationship with the emergency management community and have shared information under certain conditions. At the same time, bureau officials

⁶ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Enhancing Partnerships Through a National Preparedness Strategy*, GAO-02-549T (Washington, D.C.: March 28, 2002).

acknowledged that the perception that a problem exists could ultimately undermine the desired unity of efforts among all levels of government. Even federal agencies perceived that intelligence sharing was a problem. For example, Department of Agriculture officials told us that they believe they have not been receiving complete threat information, consequently hampering their ability to manage associated risks.

Most Key Elements of a Unified Homeland Security Approach Are Developing

Some homeland security initiatives to unify efforts are in place or under development. At the same time, we could not confirm that another key element, a definition of homeland security, was being addressed at the time we collected data for our report. The President established the Office of Homeland Security to serve as the focal point to coordinate the nation's efforts in combating terrorism within the United States. The office is developing a national strategy and has begun to forge partnerships within the interagency system, with state and local governments, and with the private sector by establishing advisory councils comprised of government and nongovernment representatives. However, implementing the national strategy will be a challenge. The partnerships are not fully developed, and an authoritative definition of homeland security does not exist.

Central Leadership Established

In October 2001, the President established a single focal point to coordinate efforts to combat terrorism in the United States—the Office of Homeland Security. This action is generally consistent with prior recommendations, including our own, to establish a single point in the federal government with responsibility and authority for all critical leadership and coordination functions to combat terrorism.⁷ We had also recommended that the office be institutionalized in law and that the head of the office be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. As constituted, the office has broad responsibilities, including (1) working with federal, state, and local governments as well as private entities to develop a national strategy and to coordinate implementation of the strategy; (2) overseeing prevention, crisis management, and consequence management activities; (3) coordinating threat and intelligence

⁷ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations*, GAO-01-822, (Washington, D.C.: September, 2001); *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change, Phase III Report of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century*, February 15, 2001; *Third Annual Report to the President and the Congress of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction*, October 31, 2001.

information; (4) reviewing governmentwide budgets for homeland security and advising agencies and the Office of Management and Budget on appropriate funding levels; and (5) coordinating critical infrastructure protection.

The National Strategy Is under Development

The Office of Homeland Security is collaborating with federal, state, and local governments and private entities to develop a national strategy and coordinate its implementation. The strategy is to be “national” in scope, including states, localities, and private-sector entities in addition to federal agencies. It is to set overall priorities and goals for homeland security and to establish performance measures to gauge progress. At the federal level, the strategy is to be supported by a crosscutting federal budget plan. The national strategy is to assist in integrating all elements of the national effort by ensuring that missions, strategic goals, priorities, roles, responsibilities, and tasks are understood and reinforced across the public and private sectors. The office plans to deliver the national strategy to the President in June 2002.

Officials at key federal agencies indicate that they expect the national strategy to provide a vision for homeland security and prioritize and validate organizational missions for homeland security. However, achieving the support of all of the organizations involved in devising and implementing the strategy is a daunting challenge because of their specialized, sometimes multiple missions; distinctive organizational cultures; and concerns about how forthcoming initiatives might affect traditional roles and missions.

Public and Private Sector Relationships Are Evolving

Partnerships are being established among federal, state, and local governments, and private sector entities to promote a unified homeland security approach. First, Executive Order 13228, which established the Office of Homeland Security, also established a Homeland Security Council made up of the President, Vice President, the Secretaries of the Treasury, Defense, Health and Human Services, and Transportation, the Attorney General, and the Directors of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, and other officers designated by the President. Second, the President also established interagency forums to consider policy issues affecting homeland security at the senior cabinet level and sub-cabinet levels. Third, to coordinate the development and implementation of homeland security policies, the Executive Order created policy coordination committees for several

functional areas of security, such as medical/public health preparedness and domestic threat response and incident management. These committees provide policy analysis in homeland security and represent the day-to-day mechanism for the coordination of homeland security policy among departments and agencies throughout the federal government and with state and local governments.

In addition, the President established a Homeland Security Advisory Council with members selected from the private sector, academia, professional service associations, federally funded research and development centers, nongovernmental organizations, and state and local governments. The council is advised by four committees representing (1) state and local officials; (2) academia and policy research; (3) the private sector; and (4) local emergency services, law enforcement, and public health/hospitals. The function of the Advisory Council includes advising the President through the Assistant for Homeland Security on developing and implementing a national strategy; improving coordination, cooperation, and communication among federal, state, and local officials and private sector entities; and advising on the feasibility and effectiveness of measures to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist threats or attacks within the United States.

In terms of interagency partnerships, federal agencies in some program areas have formal mechanisms to support collaboration, and other agencies report improvement in communication and cooperation. For example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has coordinated the emergency response capabilities of 26 federal agencies and the American Red Cross by developing a comprehensive plan that establishes their primary and secondary disaster relief responsibilities, known as the *Federal Response Plan*. The plan establishes a process and structure for the systematic and coordinated delivery of federal assistance to state and local governments overwhelmed by a major disaster or emergency. As another example, the Department of Justice, as directed by Congress, developed the Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan. The plan, issued in 1988, represents a substantial interagency effort.

After the events of September 11, officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Transportation, and the Treasury told us that their relationships with other federal agencies have improved. For example, some agencies reported increased contact with the intelligence community and regular contact with the Office of Homeland Security.

Some agencies have indicated that they also provided a new or expanded level of assistance to other agencies. For example, the Department of Agriculture used its mobile testing labs to help test mail samples for anthrax; the Department of Defense provided security to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration prior to and during the launch of the space shuttle and to the Secret Service at such major sporting events as the Winter Olympics in Utah and the Super Bowl in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 2002; and the National Guard assisted with the security of commercial airports throughout the United States.

Although the federal government can assign roles to federal agencies under a national strategy, it may need to seek consensus on these roles with other levels of government and the private sector. The President's Homeland Security Advisory Council is a step toward achieving that consensus. However, state and local governments are seeking greater input in policymaking. Although state and local governments seek direction from the federal government, according to the National Governors' Association, they oppose mandated participation and prefer broad guidelines or benchmarks. Mandated approaches could stifle state-level innovation and prevent states from serving as testing grounds for new approaches to homeland security.

In terms of the private sector, partnerships between it and the public sector are forming, but they are not yet developed to the level of those in Y2K efforts, generally due to the emerging nature of homeland security. Nonetheless, some progress has been made. For example, the North American Electric Reliability Council has partnered with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Energy to establish threat levels that they share with utility companies as threats change. Similarly, a Department of Commerce task force is to identify opportunities to partner with private sector entities to enhance security of critical infrastructure.

An Official, Governmentwide Definition of Homeland Security Does Not Exist

Commonly accepted definitions help provide assurance that organizational, management, and budgetary decisions are made consistently across the organizations involved in a crosscutting effort. For example, they help guide agencies in organizing and allocating resources and can help promote more effective agency and intergovernmental operations by facilitating communication. A definition of homeland security can also help to enforce budget discipline and support more accurate monitoring of homeland security expenditures. The lack of a common definition has hampered the monitoring of expenditures for other crosscutting programs. In our prior work, we reported that the amounts of

governmentwide terrorism-related funding and spending were uncertain because, among other reasons, definitions of antiterrorism and counterterrorism varied from agency to agency.⁸ On the other hand, the Department of Defense has a draft definition of its own to identify departmental homeland security roles and missions and to support organizational realignments, such as the April 2002 announcement of the establishment of the Northern Command. The department has also required that the services and other organizations use standard terminology when communicating with each other and other federal agencies to ensure a common understanding occurs. However, when the department commented on a draft of this report, it stated that it continues to refine its definition. The department's comments are reprinted in their entirety in Appendix III. Office of Management and Budget officials stated that they also crafted a definition of homeland security to report how much money would be spent for homeland security as shown in the president's fiscal year 2003 budget. These officials acknowledge that their definition is not authoritative and expect the Office of Homeland Security to create a definition before the fiscal year 2004 budget process begins. Officials at other key federal agencies also expect the Office of Homeland Security to craft such a definition. In the interim, the potential exists for an uncoordinated approach to homeland security caused by duplication of efforts or gaps in coverage, misallocation of resources, and inadequate monitoring of expenditures.

Conclusions

The Office of Homeland Security faces a task of daunting complexity in unifying the capabilities of a multitude of federal, state, and local governments and private organizations. As shown in our previous reports on combating terrorism, duplication and gaps in coverage can occur when the nation's capabilities are not effectively integrated. Homeland security efforts are not yet focused and coordinated. Some organizations are forging ahead and creating homeland security programs without knowing how these programs will integrate into a national plan while other organizations are waiting for direction from the Office of Homeland Security. Since the Office of Homeland Security plans to address the key issues needing immediate attention—preparing a national strategy, clarifying roles and missions, establishing performance measures, and

⁸ U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Intergovernmental Partnership in a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness*, [GAO-02-547T](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 22, 2002)

setting priorities and goals, we are making no recommendations concerning these issues at this time. However, commonly accepted or authoritative definitions of fundamental concepts, such as homeland security, will also be essential to integrate homeland security efforts effectively. Without this degree of definition, communication between participants will lack clarity, coordination of implementation plans will be more difficult, and targeting of resources will be more uncertain.

Recommendations

We recommend that the President direct the Office of Homeland Security to

- develop a comprehensive, governmentwide definition of homeland security, and
- include the definition in the forthcoming national strategy.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We presented a draft of this report to the Office of Homeland Security; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Justice, Transportation, and Treasury; the Customs Service; and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Only the Departments of Justice, Defense, Health and Human Services and the Customs Service provided written comments on a draft of this report.

The Department of Justice was concerned that the draft report did not discuss several key aspects of its efforts related to ensuring homeland security, noting in particular that we did not note the department's role in the development of the Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan. We agree that this plan is an important contribution to homeland security, and we revised our text to recognize the department's efforts in developing the plan. The department's comments and our evaluation of the comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix II.

The Department of Defense stated that the draft portrayed the many challenges facing the departments and agencies as they address homeland security efforts. However, the department pointed out that its definition of homeland security, developed for its own use, was still in draft at the time of our report. We were aware of that and revised our report language to clarify this point. We also incorporated technical corrections as appropriate.

The Department of Health and Human Services and the Customs Service provided no overall comments but did provide letters in response to our request for comments, which we have included in appendix IV and V, respectively. The Department of Health and Human Services also provided technical comments, which have been incorporated in the report, as appropriate.

Scope and Methodology

We discuss our scope and methodology in detail in appendix I.

As agreed with the offices of our congressional requesters, unless they announce the contents of the report earlier, we will not distribute it until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies of this report to appropriate congressional committees. We will also send a copy to the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security; the Secretaries of Defense, Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, Transportation, and the Treasury; the Attorney General; the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Administrators of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Environmental Protection Agency; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will make copies available to others upon request.

If you or your staff have any questions regarding this report or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me at (202) 512-6020. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VI.



Raymond J. Decker
Director, Defense Capabilities
and Management

List of Congressional Requesters

The Honorable Steve LaTourette
Chairman

The Honorable Jerry F. Costello
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Economic Development,
Public Buildings, and Emergency Management
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security,
Veterans Affairs, and International Relations
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Department of Energy Reorganization
Special Oversight Panel
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable J.C. Watts, Jr.
House of Representatives

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
House of Representatives

The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest
House of Representatives

The Honorable Vic Snyder
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To determine the extent to which homeland security efforts represent a unified approach, we interviewed officials and obtained available documents from the Office of Homeland Security, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Transportation, and the Treasury. We selected these agencies based on their prominent role in the *U.S. Government Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan* and the *Federal Response Plan*. In addition, we talked to officials from the Office of Management and Budget to discuss budgeting for homeland security. We interviewed officials of the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities, the National Emergency Management Association, the American Red Cross, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, Gilmore Panel,¹ the Hart-Rudman Commission,² the Rand Corporation, the ANSER Institute of Homeland Security, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the American Bankers Association, the North American Electric Reliability Council, the National Industrial Transportation League, and the Southern Company. We also reviewed year-2000 efforts, our related work on combating terrorism, and

¹The Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, also known as the Gilmore Panel, assessed the capabilities for responding to terrorist incidents in the U.S. homeland involving weapons of mass destruction. The panel examined the response capabilities at the federal, state, and local levels, with a particular emphasis on the latter two.

²The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, commonly known as the Hart-Rudman Commission, published three reports, and examined (1) the transformation emerging over the next quarter-century in the global and domestic U.S. security environment; (2) U.S. security interests, objectives, and strategy; and (3) the structures and processes of the U.S. national security apparatus for 21st century relevancy.

Government Performance and Results Act reports we previously issued to identify key elements that support a unified approach to addressing public problems. We did not evaluate the Office of Homeland Security leadership or its efforts to develop the national strategy because it was too early to judge adequately its performance in these areas. Our selection methodology does not permit projection nationwide.

We conducted our review from August 2001 through April 2002 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Justice



U.S. Department of Justice

Washington, D.C. 20530

MAY 28 2002

Raymond J. Decker
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Decker:

On May 2, 2002, the General Accounting Office (GAO) provided the Department of Justice (DOJ) copies of its draft report entitled "HOMELAND SECURITY: Key Elements to Unify Efforts Are Underway But Uncertainty Remains." We are concerned that the GAO did not discuss several key aspects of the Department's efforts related to ensuring homeland security. The DOJ, through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the lead federal agency for crisis management of and crisis response to terrorist and other critical incidents, has a key role in addressing such incidents. This role is clearly set out in the U.S. Government Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan (CONPLAN), which was developed by the DOJ, and in the Federal Response Plan. We believe the limited coverage of the DOJ's activities and responsibilities may be the result of the GAO not having reviewed all pertinent DOJ documents and interviewed all appropriate DOJ officials. We see nothing in the draft report to indicate that the following activities of the DOJ were considered by the GAO in preparing this document.

The GAO fails to mention the existence of the Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan, the national counterterrorism strategy developed through DOJ leadership at the behest of Congress. The GAO repeatedly references the need for "an overarching strategy that identifies goals and objectives, priorities, measurable outcomes, and state and local roles," (see, e.g., page 3) but fails to mention the Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan, which contains all these elements. Although the GAO references the relevance of its earlier work on combating terrorism – including the recent "COMBATING TERRORISM: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations" (September 2001) – it fails to mention that in that particular report it determined that the Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan "represents a substantial interagency effort and is the one document that could serve as a basis for a national strategy."

Nor does the GAO reference DOJ's role in domestic preparedness, surely a key aspect of the as yet undefined homeland security. DOJ's role in domestic preparedness over the years has included substantial efforts to train state and local first responders and emergency personnel, operation of a threat warning system, comprehensive threat assessments, development of legal authorities to address

Mr Raymond J. Decker

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national security threats, and much more. A new approach to homeland security cannot afford to overlook prior ground-breaking work in the related areas of domestic preparedness, counterterrorism, and national security.

In discussing interagency partnerships, the GAO acknowledges the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) efforts in developing a *Federal Response Plan* which establishes primary and secondary disaster relief responsibilities in delivering systematic and coordinated federal assistance to state and local governments in a major disaster or emergency. (Page 10) Of equal significance, however, is the interagency effort (led by DOJ through the FBI) to develop the CONPLAN, signed in January 2001. The CONPLAN is designed to provide overall guidance to federal, state, and local agencies concerning the federal government response to a potential or actual terrorist threat or incident that occurs in the United States, particularly one involving weapons of mass destruction. This plan outlines an organized and unified capability for a timely, coordinated response by federal agencies to a terrorist threat or act. It establishes conceptual guidance for assessing and monitoring a developing threat, notifying appropriate federal, state, and local agencies of the nature of the threat, and deploying the requisite advisory and technical resources to assist the lead federal agency in facilitating interdepartmental coordination of crisis and consequence management activities. The plan:

- Establishes a structure for a systematic, coordinated, and effective national response to threats or acts of terrorism in the United States;
- Defines procedures for the use of federal resources to augment and support local and state governments; and
- Encompasses both crisis and consequence management responsibilities and articulates the coordination relationships between these missions.

While acknowledging other ongoing efforts, the report also fails to acknowledge the effort to improve intelligence sharing. Inadequate intelligence sharing is cited as an impediment to homeland security efforts. (Page 7) Efforts led by the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) to improve intelligence sharing are underway. A Homeland Security Presidential Directive is being drafted to address this important shortfall. Specifically, the report mentions that other federal agencies, such as the FBI, don't recognize security clearances granted by FEMA. It should be noted that FEMA personnel, as well as personnel from other agencies whose clearances have been passed, have worked within FBI space and have participated in classified forums.

DOJ concurs with the recommendation to define the term "homeland security," and formalize it by including it in the national strategy. Such a definition should provide an explicit delineation of roles and responsibilities for the OHS, particularly in the area of "overseeing prevention, crisis management, and consequence management activities." By existing Presidential Decision Directives (which have not been revoked) and by the Federal Response Plan and CONPLAN on which the GAO relies, crisis management and consequence management activities at the federal level have been led by the FBI and FEMA, respectively. OHS's role and responsibility in these activities is as yet undefined.

Mr Raymond J. Decker

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I hope you will consider our concerns in preparing the final GAO report on this subject. If you have any questions regarding the Department's comments, you may contact Vickie L. Sloan, Director, Audit Liaison Office, on (202) 514-0469.

Sincerely,



Robert F. Diegelman
Acting Assistant Attorney General
for Administration

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Justice's letter dated May 28, 2002.

GAO Comments

The Department of Justice was concerned that we did not discuss several key aspects of the department's efforts related to homeland security. Specifically, the department mentioned several plans and roles that it believes should be mentioned in the report. We agree that the plans and roles the department outlines are important and that they play a vital role in homeland security. These plans and efforts along with the many other plans and efforts of local, state and federal governments as well as the private sector—will need to be integrated by the Office of Homeland Security, in its efforts to develop a national homeland security strategy.

The department specifically mentions the Five-Year Interagency Counterterrorism and Technology Crime Plan and said that we failed to state that the plan represents a substantial interagency effort and is one document that could serve as a basis for a national strategy—a statement the department points out is contained in a prior GAO report, *Combating Terrorism: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations* [GAO-01-822](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 2001). However, in the same report, we also state the plan lacks certain critical elements including a focus on results-oriented outcomes. Moreover, because there is no national strategy that includes all the necessary elements, the Office of Homeland Security is developing an overarching national strategy, which will build on the planning efforts of all participants.

The department also stated that we did not reference its role in domestic preparedness. Domestic preparedness and the roles that all participants play in it are important. However, domestic preparedness is only one element of homeland security. As our report points out, our objective was to evaluate the extent to which homeland security efforts to date represent a unified approach. In developing the national strategy, the Office of Homeland Security will address individual agency efforts including those involved in domestic preparedness efforts.

The department also noted that we did not cite its efforts regarding the U.S. Government Interagency Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan. To the contrary, we are very aware of the overall importance of the plan and used it as a basis for selecting the federal agencies that we interviewed. This is discussed in appendix I—scope and methodology.

The department further cites our failure to acknowledge efforts to improve intelligence sharing. Our objective was to evaluate the extent to which homeland security efforts were unified, and in our discussions, intelligence sharing was repeatedly mentioned as an obstacle to further integration. Despite the department's efforts to improve intelligence sharing as cited in its letter, our work showed that there is a prevailing perception that it continues to be a problem. We do mention, in the section on evolving public and private sector relationships, the intelligence sharing efforts led by the Office of Homeland Security to include the Homeland Security Council and the policy coordination committees.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense



SPECIAL OPERATIONS/
LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

Mr. Raymond J. Decker
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Decker:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, "HOMELAND SECURITY: Key Elements to Unify Efforts Are Underway but Uncertainty Remains," dated May 2, 2002 (GAO Code 350089/GAO-02-610).

We have reviewed the draft report and thank you for the opportunity to comment. We think the report portrays the many challenges facing the departments and agencies of the Federal Government as they address Homeland Security efforts.

However, the last two sentences at the bottom of page 11 imply that the Department has finalized its definitions of Homeland Defense and Homeland Security. To the contrary, the department continues to refine these definitions and they are not yet finalized. DoD has generated interim definitions on the DoD role in support of HLS for use in internal Department planning efforts and other related purposes.

In addition, we have attached some minor technical inaccuracies with recommended changes separately.

The Department appreciates the GAO's interest in this effort and the opportunity to comment. My point of contact for this issue is: Col Paul H. Maubert, Territorial Security, at (703) 692-6691.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Andrews".

Robert Andrews
Principal Deputy

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Defense's letter.

GAO Comments

The Department of Defense requested that we more clearly state that it continues to define homeland defense and homeland security and its role in support of homeland security. We agreed and incorporated this information in our report section on the nonexistence of an official governmentwide definition of homeland security.

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Health and Human Services



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of Inspector General

Washington, D.C. 20201

MAY 29 2002

Mr. Raymond J. Decker
Director, Defense Capabilities
and Management
United States General
Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Decker:

The Department has reviewed your draft report entitled "Homeland Security: Key Elements to Unify Efforts Are Underway but Uncertainty Remains" and has no specific comments at this time.

However, the Department has provided several technical comments directly to your staff.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on this draft report before its publication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Rehnquist".

Janet Rehnquist
Inspector General

Enclosure

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is transmitting the Department's response to this draft report in our capacity as the Department's designated focal point and coordinator for General Accounting Office reports. The OIG has not conducted an independent assessment of these comments and therefore expresses no opinion on them.

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Health and Human Services letter dated May 29, 2002.

GAO Comments

The Department of Health and Human Services had no specific comments on the draft report. However, the Department did provide several technical comments that we incorporated as appropriate.

Appendix V: Comments from the Customs Service



U.S. Customs Service

Memorandum

DATE: May 29, 2002

FILE: AUD-1-OP CN

MEMORANDUM FOR RAYMOND J. DECKER
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

FROM: Director,
Office of Planning

SUBJECT: Comments on GAO Draft Audit Report Entitled
Homeland Security: Key Elements to Unify Efforts
Are Underway but Uncertainty Remains

Thank you for providing us with a copy of your draft report entitled "Homeland Security: Key Elements to Unify Efforts Are Underway but Uncertainty Remains" and the chance to discuss the issues in this report.

We have reviewed this report and have no comments to make at this time on the substance of the report.

We did not identify any information that would warrant protection under the Freedom of Information Act.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the draft report. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Ms. Cecelia Neglia at (202) 927-9369.


William F. Riley

TRADITION

★

SERVICE

★

HONOR

**Appendix V: Comments from the Customs
Service**

The following are GAO's comments on the Customs' letter dated
May 29, 2002.

GAO Comments

The Customs Service had no specific comments on the draft report.

Appendix VI: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Brian J. Lepore (202) 512-4523

Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Lorelei St. James, Patricia Sari-Spear, Kimberly C. Seay, Matthew W. Ullengren, William J. Rigazio, and Susan Woodward made key contributions to this report.

Related GAO Products

Homeland Security

Homeland Security: Responsibility and Accountability for Achieving National Goals. ([GAO-02-627T](#), April 11, 2002).

National Preparedness: Integration of Federal, State, Local, and Private Sector Efforts Is Critical to an Effective National Strategy for Homeland Security ([GAO-02-621T](#), April 11, 2002).

Homeland Security: Progress Made, More Direction and Partnership Sought ([GAO-02-490T](#), March 12, 2002).

Homeland Security: Challenges and Strategies in Addressing Short- and Long-Term National Needs ([GAO-02-160T](#), November 7, 2001).

Homeland Security: A Risk Management Approach Can Guide Preparedness Efforts ([GAO-02-208T](#), October 31, 2001).

Homeland Security: Need to Consider VA's Role in Strengthening Federal Preparedness ([GAO-02-145T](#), October 15, 2001).

Homeland Security: Key Elements of a Risk Management Approach ([GAO-02-150T](#), October 12, 2001).

Homeland Security: A Framework for Addressing the Nation's Issues ([GAO-01-1158T](#), September 21, 2001).

Combating Terrorism

Combating Terrorism: Intergovernmental Cooperation in the Development of a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness ([GAO-02-550T](#), April 2, 2002).

Combating Terrorism: Enhancing Partnerships Through a National Preparedness Strategy ([GAO-02-549T](#), March 28, 2002).

Combating Terrorism: Critical Components of a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness ([GAO-02-548T](#), March 25, 2002).

Combating Terrorism: Intergovernmental Partnership in a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness ([GAO-02-547T](#)), March 22, 2002).

Combating Terrorism: Key Aspects of a National Strategy to Enhance State and Local Preparedness ([GAO-02-473T](#), March 1, 2002).

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Combating Terrorism: Analysis of Potential Emergency Response Equipment and Sustainment Costs ([GAO-NSIAD-99-151](#), June 9, 1999).

Combating Terrorism: Use of National Guard Response Teams Is Unclear ([GAO/NSIAD-99-110](#), May 21, 1999).

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Bioterrorism: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Role in Public Health Protection ([GAO-02-235T](#), November 15, 2001).

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Bioterrorism: Coordination and Preparedness ([GAO-02-129T](#), October 5, 2001).

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Chemical and Biological Defense: Improved Risk Assessments and Inventory Management Are Needed ([GAO-01-667](#), September 28, 2001).

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Need for Comprehensive Threat and Risk Assessments of Chemical and Biological Attacks ([GAO/NSIAD-99-163](#), September 7, 1999).

Chemical and Biological Defense: Program Planning and Evaluation Should Follow Results Act Framework ([GAO/NSIAD-99-159](#), August 16, 1999).

Combating Terrorism: Observations on Biological Terrorism and Public Health Initiatives ([GAO/T-NSIAD-99-112](#), March 16, 1999).

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Disaster Assistance: Improvement Needed in Disaster Declaration Criteria and Eligibility Assurance Procedures ([GAO-01-837](#), August 31, 2001).

FEMA and Army Must Be Proactive in Preparing States for Emergencies ([GAO-01-850](#), August 13, 2001).

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Managing for Results: Using the Results Act to Address Mission Fragmentation and Program Overlap ([GAO/AIMD-97-156](#), August 29, 1997).

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Block Grants: Issues in Designing Accountability Provisions ([GAO/AIMD-95-226](#), September 1, 1995).

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