

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-507T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2003, GAO designated implementing and transforming DHS as high risk because the failure to address risks associated with transforming 22 agencies into one department could have serious consequences for U.S. national and economic security. While challenges remain, DHS has made considerable progress. As a result, in 2013 GAO narrowed the scope of the high-risk area to focus on strengthening and integrating DHS management functions (human capital, acquisition, financial, and information technology). This statement discusses DHS's progress and actions remaining in addressing these functions with a focus on acquisition management. In fiscal year 2015 alone, DHS reported that it planned to spend approximately \$7.2 billion on its major acquisition programs to help execute its many critical missions. This statement is based on GAO's 2015 high-risk update, GAO products from 2005 through 2016, and selected updates from ongoing work. To conduct past and ongoing work we reviewed key documents such as DHS strategies and interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

This testimony contains no new recommendations. GAO has made about 2,400 recommendations to DHS since 2003 to strengthen management efforts, among other things. DHS has implemented more than 70 percent of these recommendations, including those related to acquisition management, and has actions under way to address others.

View [GAO-16-507T](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or gambler@gao.gov; or Michele Mackin at (202) 512-4841 or mackinm@gao.gov.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Progress Made, but Work Remains in Strengthening Acquisition and Other Management Functions

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to strengthen and integrate its management functions have resulted in it meeting three and partially meeting two of GAO's criteria for removal from the high-risk list (see table).

Assessment of DHS Progress in Addressing the Strengthening DHS Management Functions High-Risk Area, as of March 2016

Criterion for removal from high-risk list	Met ^a	Partially met ^b	Not met ^c
Leadership commitment	X		
Action plan	X		
Capacity (having sufficient resources)		X	
Monitoring	X		
Demonstrated progress		X	
Total	3	2	0

Source: GAO analysis of DHS documents, interviews, and prior GAO reports. | GAO-16-507T

^a"Met": There are no significant actions that need to be taken to further address this criterion.

^b"Partially met": Some but not all actions necessary to generally meet the criterion have been taken.

^c"Not met": Few, if any, actions toward meeting the criterion have been taken.

For example, DHS has established a plan for addressing the high-risk area and a framework for monitoring its progress in implementing the plan. However, DHS needs to show additional results in other areas, including demonstrating the ability to achieve sustained progress across 30 outcomes that GAO identified and DHS agreed were needed to address the high-risk area. As of March 2016, DHS had fully addressed 10 of these outcomes but work remained in 20.

GAO has reported on DHS's acquisition management for over 10 years. The department has struggled to effectively manage its major programs, including ensuring that all major acquisitions had approved baselines and that they were affordable. GAO has noted significant progress in recent reviews (see table). This progress is largely attributable to sustained senior leadership attention.

GAO Findings and Recent Efforts by DHS to Improve Acquisition Management

GAO Review	GAO Finding	DHS Progress
November 2008	DHS's Joint Requirements Council (JRC), which had been responsible for managing investment portfolios and validating requirements, had not met since 2006.	The JRC was reinstated in 2014; it is the subject of an ongoing GAO review.
April 2014	DHS's Acquisition Review Board rarely directed programs to make affordability tradeoffs, even in light of a 30 percent funding gap for the department's major acquisitions.	DHS leadership is discussing affordability at all program reviews to help ensure adequate funding exists.
March 2015	DHS needed to improve the quality of acquisition data reported by components.	DHS has efforts underway to address this issue.
April 2015	Sixteen of the 22 programs GAO reviewed had agreed-upon acquisition program baseline cost, schedule, and performance objectives.	DHS has continued to obtain department-level approval for program baselines as needed.

Source: GAO analysis of DHS documents, interviews, and prior GAO reports. | GAO-16-507T

To ensure that recent efforts are sustained, the department must continue to implement its sound acquisition policy consistently and effectively across all components. GAO has made numerous recommendations in this regard, which DHS has concurred with and is taking actions to implement.