



October 2016

HOMELAND SECURITY ACQUISITIONS

Joint Requirements
Council's Initial
Approach Is Generally
Sound and It Is
Developing a Process
to Inform Investment
Priorities

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-171](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2003, DHS established a JRC to review and prioritize requirements across the department's components—such as the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. However, due to a lack of senior management involvement, it became inactive. Over a decade later and after a 2008 GAO recommendation that the JRC be reinstated, the Secretary of Homeland Security directed the creation of a new JRC in June 2014.

GAO was asked to review the organization and activities of the current JRC. This report addresses, among other things, the extent to which the JRC (1) has a structure and management approach consistent with key practices; and (2) has begun reviewing and validating capability and requirements documents and informing DHS investment priorities.

GAO reviewed relevant policies and procedures, examined capability and requirements documents, and assessed the JRC's efforts against GAO's key practices for organizational transformation. GAO also interviewed JRC and senior DHS officials, the OCIO and other DHS headquarters officials, component officials, and officials from a non-generalizable sample of 10 program offices that had at least one document reviewed or validated by the JRC or were early in the acquisition life cycle.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Homeland Security direct the JRC to make the OCIO a JRC principal. DHS concurred with the recommendation and expects to implement it by October 31, 2016.

View [GAO-17-171](#). For more information, contact Michele Mackin at (202) 512-4841 or mackinm@gao.gov.

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Joint Requirements Council's Initial Approach Is Generally Sound and It Is Developing a Process to Inform Investment Priorities

What GAO Found

GAO found that the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Joint Requirements Council's (JRC) structure and management approach—informed by assessments of requirements processes, guidance, and lessons learned from DHS components and the Department of Defense—are generally consistent with key practices for mergers and organizational transformations. However, although 24 of DHS's 36 major acquisitions are information technology programs, the department's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) serves as a non-voting advisor to the JRC. Because GAO has previously identified poor requirements definition as a factor in failed information technology programs, a more formal and consistent role for the OCIO could help minimize the risk that programs will begin with poorly developed requirements. In addition, some components lack the capacity to develop sound capability and requirements documents to present to the JRC. DHS officials are aware of this issue and are planning to take steps to address it, but it will likely take some time to do so.

The JRC has begun to review or validate capability and requirements documents, including one joint-operational requirements document between the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection for a common aircraft mission system.

JRC-Reviewed or Validated Capability and Requirements Documents

Capability Analysis Study Plan	Capability Analysis Report	Mission Needs Statement	Concept of Operations	Operational Requirements Document	Joint Operational Requirements Document
13	0	8	0	8	1

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data, as of August 2016. | GAO-17-171

The JRC's role in prioritizing requirements and informing DHS's investment decisions is just beginning under a new joint assessment of requirements process. As the process evolves, the JRC will brief senior officials responsible for preparing DHS's budget requests. As shown below, the JRC plans for almost all of DHS's requirements to be evaluated under the new process in time to inform resource tradeoffs for the fiscal year 2021 budget request.

Plans for the Joint Assessment of Requirements to Prioritize Investments

Year of review	Fiscal year 2016	Fiscal year 2017	Fiscal year 2018
Scope of requirements JRC will prioritize	Limited number (8-10) of new	All new and existing for major acquisitions	All new and existing, including for some smaller acquisitions
Planned outcome	Informational briefing in spring 2017	Informational briefing in spring 2018	Spring 2019 briefing to inform fiscal year 2021 budget request

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data and discussions with agency officials. | GAO-17-171

While it is too soon to tell what impact the JRC and associated processes will have on investment priorities or inefficiencies, JRC and other senior DHS officials recognize that sustained management focus is needed to continue momentum.

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Abbreviations

ARB	Acquisition Review Board
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DMAG	Deputy's Management Action Group
DOD	Department of Defense
IT	Information Technology
JAR	Joint Assessment of Requirements
JRC	Joint Requirements Council
JRIMS	Joint Requirements Integration and Management System
JROC	Joint Requirements Oversight Council
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
ORD	Operational Requirements Document

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October 24, 2016

Congressional Requesters

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) invests billions of dollars each year in major acquisition programs to help execute its many critical missions and ultimately expects to invest more than \$180 billion in these programs. Since 2005, GAO has made recommendations that DHS prioritize its major acquisition programs department-wide and ensure that its acquisition portfolio is consistent with resource constraints. Moreover, since 2003, GAO's high risk work has been tracking DHS's ability to build a single, cohesive department—a goal that requires effective collaboration and integration of its various components and management functions. DHS initially established a Joint Requirements Council (JRC) in 2003 to identify common requirements across DHS's headquarters and component agencies, and we have reported that the JRC played a key role in identifying several overlapping investments.¹ However, the previous iteration of the JRC was never fully implemented due to a lack of senior management officials' involvement. In 2008, GAO recommended that DHS reinstate the JRC to review and approve acquisition requirements and assess potential duplication of effort. After 8 years without an active effort to review requirements and prioritize investments across DHS components, the Secretary of Homeland Security directed the creation of a new JRC in June 2014. You requested that we review the organization and activities of the current JRC. Specifically, this report addresses (1) the factors the JRC assessed when establishing DHS's joint requirements system; (2) the extent to which the JRC's management approach is consistent with our key practices for mergers and organizational transformations; (3) the extent of the JRC's engagement with senior leadership and DHS components; and (4) the extent to which the JRC has validated capability and requirements documents and begun to inform DHS's investment priorities.

To conduct our work, we reviewed relevant policies and procedures, including the November 2014 JRC charter, the March 2016 Joint Requirements Integration and Management System (JRIMS) management directive, and the April 2016 JRIMS operational manual, as

¹ GAO, *Department of Homeland Security: Billions Invested in Major Programs Lack Appropriate Oversight*, [GAO-09-29](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 18, 2008).

well as DHS management memoranda such as the Secretary's April 2014 memorandum on strengthening DHS's unity of effort. We examined key capability, requirements, and acquisition documents, including capability analysis study plans, operational requirements documents, and acquisition decision memoranda. We analyzed the organization and activities of the JRC against GAO's key practices for mergers and organizational transformation.² We interviewed senior DHS officials, JRC principals from components and headquarters organizations, JRC staff, portfolio team members, and the former and current JRC chairs. We met with DHS's Offices of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and the Chief Procurement Officer to learn about their engagement with the JRC. We also selected a non-representative sample of 10 major acquisition programs and spoke with their program managers to learn about their experiences with the JRC. We selected programs that have had at least one capability or requirements document validated or reviewed by the JRC, or were in the early phases of the acquisition life cycle (i.e., those that were in a position to interact with the JRC regarding expected capabilities or requirements). In addition, we interviewed a former chair and a former member of the Department of Defense's (DOD) Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) to gain insights about their experiences with a joint requirements organization. See appendix I for additional information on our objectives, scope, and methodology.

We conducted this performance audit from November 2015 to October 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

In 2003, DHS established a JRC that was responsible for identifying crosscutting opportunities and overlapping or common requirements and helping to determine how best to ensure that DHS used its finite investment resources wisely. However, in 2006, the JRC stopped meeting after the chair was assigned to other duties within the department. In 2008, we reported that DHS had not effectively implemented or adhered

² GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003).

to its review process for major acquisitions. We attributed this poor implementation, in part, to the fact that the JRC had neither effectively carried out its oversight responsibilities nor had sufficient resources such as personnel to support its intended oversight role. At the same time, however, we found that the JRC had played a key role in identifying several overlapping investments. We recommended that DHS reinstate the JRC or establish another departmental joint requirements oversight board to review and approve acquisition requirements and assess potential duplication efforts.³ In response to our 2008 recommendation, DHS indicated it planned to re-establish a JRC but provided no timeline for doing so.

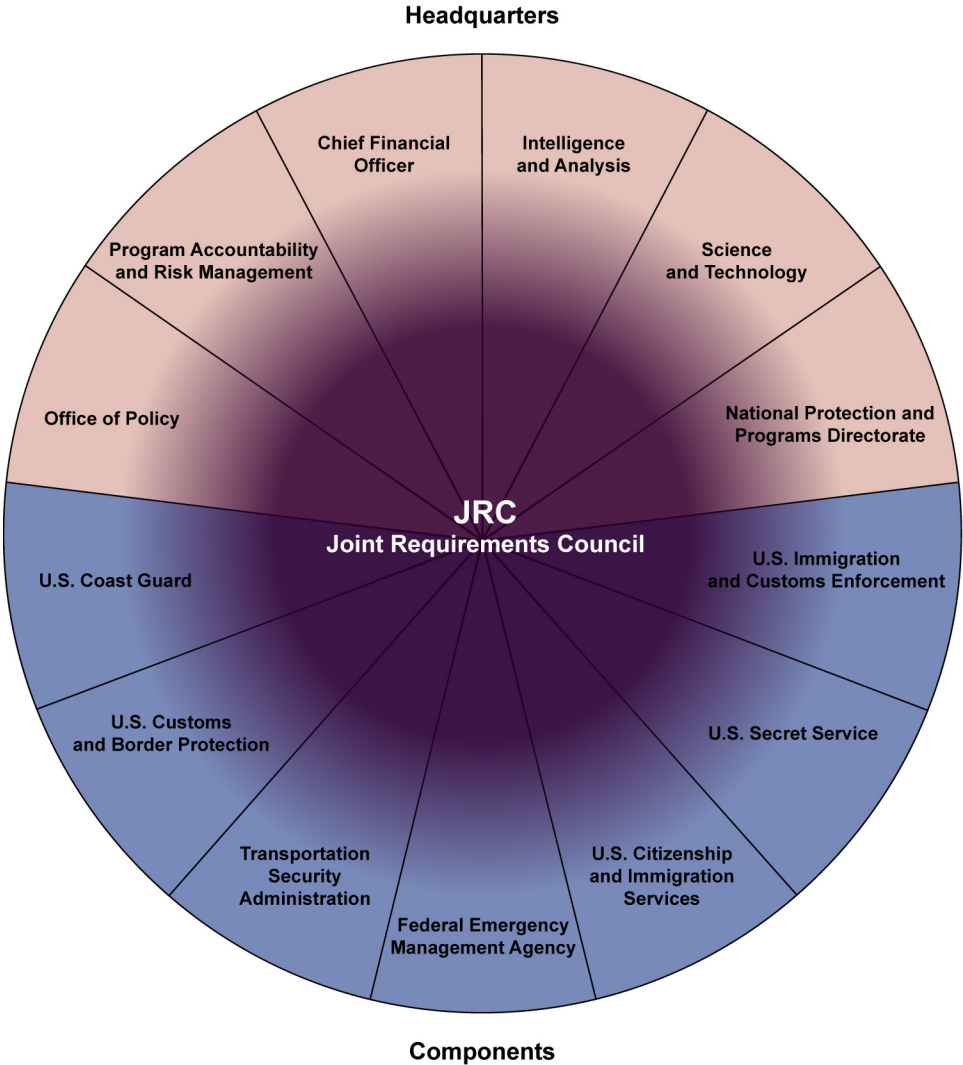
In fact, it was not until June 2014 that the Secretary of Homeland Security directed the creation of a joint requirements process, led by a component-composed and component-chaired JRC. This step was preceded by an April 2014 memorandum, where the Secretary outlined the need to unify decision-making processes and better empower the DHS components to execute their operations. The current JRC consists of a chair and 13 members, called principals, who are senior executives or officers that represent key DHS headquarters offices and seven of the department's operational components.⁴ JRC principals are expected to represent the views of their components or office leadership, endorse and prioritize validated capability needs and operational requirements, and make recommendations that are supported by analytical rigor.

The JRC chair is to rotate annually among the seven operational components, according to the JRC's charter. Figure 1 depicts the components and headquarter offices with JRC principals.

³ [GAO-09-29](#).

⁴ While not all operational and support components, such as the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, are JRC principals, they all have the opportunity to be represented on the JRC through portfolio teams and gatekeepers. Further, if a capability were of interest, the component would be asked to attend JRC meetings in an advisory role.

Figure 1: Principals of DHS's Joint Requirements Council



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy. | GAO-17-171

Note: The Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the Office of Program Accountability and Risk Management represent DHS's Management Directorate, which is a principal of the JRC.

The JRC provides input to two senior-level entities.

- The Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG), which the Secretary established in April 2014, is a decision-making body that is chaired by the Deputy Secretary. Its membership consists of the DHS Chief of Staff, DHS Under Secretaries, senior operational component deputies and select support component deputies, and the Chief Financial Officer. Importantly, the DMAG provides recommendations to the Deputy Secretary for consideration in the annual program and budget review, which reflects DHS's investment priorities. The DMAG reviews JRC-validated capability needs and recommendations; provides direction and guidance to the JRC; and endorses or directs related follow-on JRC activities.
- The JRC chair is a member of the Acquisition Review Board (ARB), which reviews major acquisition programs for management, accountability, and alignment with the department's strategic initiatives at key milestones, called acquisition decision events. The ARB is chaired by the acquisition decision authority, which is the Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary for Management, or a Component Acquisition Executive, depending on the level of the acquisition program. The JRC advises the ARB on capability gaps, needs, and requirements at key milestones in the acquisition life cycle.

In addition, the JRC provides input to the budgeting process through various DHS organizations, such as the Chief Financial Officer's Council. The JRC has also recently started to provide input to the DHS Science and Technology Research and Development Council.

The acquisition decision authority is responsible for reviewing and approving the movement of DHS's acquisition programs through four phases of the acquisition life cycle at a series of five acquisition decision events. The four phases of the acquisition life cycle, as established in DHS acquisition policy, are:

1. **Need:** Department officials identify that there is a need, consistent with DHS's strategic plan, justifying an investment in a new capability and the establishment of an acquisition program to produce that capability;
2. **Analyze/Select:** A program manager reviews alternative approaches to meeting the need, helps finalize operational requirements, and recommends a best option to the acquisition decision authority;
3. **Obtain:** The program manager develops, tests, and evaluates the selected option; and

4. **Produce/Deploy/Support:** DHS delivers the new capability to its operators and maintains the capability until it is retired.

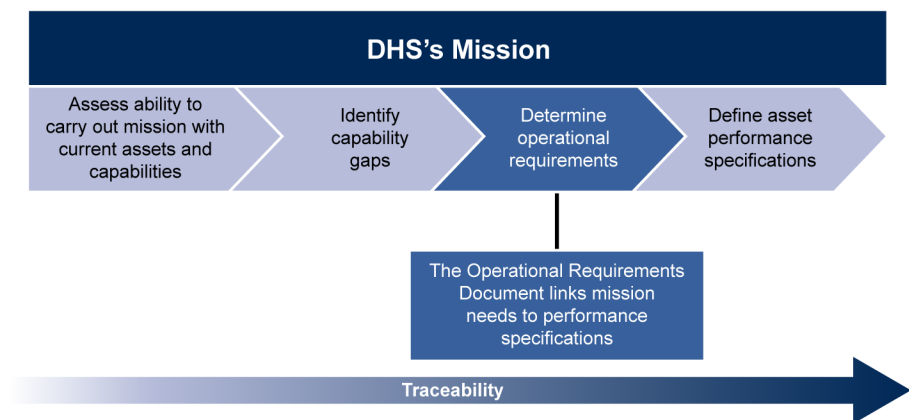
Major acquisition programs develop capabilities that help improve DHS's ability to execute its mission. A capability is, generally speaking, the means to accomplish a mission or objective and may be achieved through materiel and non-materiel solutions.⁵ For example, a capability to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance to identify a target might be a maritime patrol aircraft mission system. DHS identifies capability needs through a number of sources, including requests from component leadership, a capability gap analysis, or external direction from Congress or the President.

Once capability needs are identified as needing a materiel solution, more specific requirements are developed for that solution. For example, a requirement for a maritime patrol aircraft's mission system could be that the system receive, process, record, and play back data. Requirements can be unique to an individual component, or they can apply to more than one component, i.e., "joint."

In general, the DHS requirements generation process moves from broad mission needs and capability gaps to operational requirements and then to more definitive asset performance specifications. Figure 2 depicts this traceability from mission needs to performance specifications.

⁵ An example of a non-materiel solution is using an existing materiel in a new or unconventional manner to close a capability gap.

Figure 2: Arrow of Traceability from Mission Needs to Performance Specifications



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy. | GAO-17-171

The JRC is responsible for validating proposed capability needs and requirements for all Level 1 and Level 2 major acquisitions, as well as for programs that are joint or of DMAG-interest, regardless of level.⁶ Prior to the establishment of the JRC, the responsibility for coordinating the review and validation of capability needs and requirements for major acquisitions was carried out by the Office of Program Accountability and Risk Management. For Level 3 non-major acquisitions that are expected to cost less than \$300 million over their life cycles, the JRC reviews the capability and requirements documentation as it would for major acquisition programs, but the sponsoring component is responsible for validation.⁷

⁶ DHS policy defines major acquisitions as Level 1 programs that are expected to cost \$1 billion or more over their life cycles and Level 2 programs that are expected to cost at least \$300 million over their life cycles. For our most recent assessments of DHS's major acquisition programs, see GAO, *Homeland Security Acquisitions: DHS Has Strengthened Management, but Execution and Affordability Concerns Endure*, [GAO-16-338SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 31, 2016); and *Homeland Security Acquisitions: Major Program Assessments Reveal Actions Needed to Improve Accountability*, [GAO-15-171SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 22, 2015).

⁷ We have ongoing work on DHS's non-major acquisition programs and expect to issue a report in the spring of 2017.

JRC Assessed Various Factors in Establishing DHS's Joint Requirements System

After it was created, as directed by the Secretary's June 2014 directive, the JRC completed a study in December 2014 that assessed DHS and DOD processes and guidance to identify key elements and desired characteristics to incorporate into a tailored DHS joint requirements system, which is now called JRIMS. The study found that the joint system must codify JRC operating procedures; identify and validate capability needs, gaps, and overlaps; and support DHS's components in analyzing ways to improve their operational effectiveness and efficiency, among other things. JRC officials were able to use information from the study to tailor their approach in establishing JRIMS. The JRC study assessed internal DHS-wide documents that provided guidance and context in determining the required elements of a joint requirements system, such as the Secretary's April 2014 Unity of Effort memorandum, a DHS memorandum focused on investment life cycle management for acquisition programs, and the DHS Acquisition Management Directive 102 Series, which is the department's key acquisition management policy. Further, the JRC assessed component-specific documents, directives, and guides that addressed components' approaches to capability management, requirements development, and acquisition activities, such as the Coast Guard's Publication 7-0 on capability management.

JRC officials told us that they also considered lessons learned from the previous iteration of the JRC, which was established in 2003. For example, they learned that it is important to maintain departmental focus on the JRC and continually engage with the components' representatives to obtain the operational perspective. We also interviewed the chair of the first JRC who told us that for the new JRC to be successful components need to see intrinsic value in the process so that they fully embrace it.

In addition to assessing DHS processes, the JRC study also reviewed similar requirements systems in use by other government organizations to help develop a tailored process at DHS. Specifically, the JRC reviewed DOD's Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System, as well as the systems employed by the military services, the intelligence community, and the U.S. Special Operations Command. One purpose of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System is to validate capability requirement documents that close or mitigate associated gaps in joint warfighting capabilities. The system is overseen by the JROC, the

body that assists in identifying, validating, and prioritizing joint military requirements.⁸

The JRC identified key practices and potential pitfalls at DOD that they considered in developing the joint requirements system at DHS. For example, the JRC analyzed the knowledge management decision support tool that DOD used to solicit comments from staff on its requirements documents and learned that the way the tool was used can result in an extended and difficult process. Therefore, in setting up a similar tool at DHS, JRC officials tried to avoid similar pitfalls. The JRC is currently developing its own knowledge management decision support tool, a database to support JRIMS, which it plans to roll out gradually to all the components starting in September 2016. DHS's knowledge management decision support tool is intended to track the capability and requirements documents as they are reviewed by stakeholders across DHS. According to a Coast Guard official, this tool is intended to create a library of requirements so that officials across DHS can determine if there are requirements that may be common with other components. JRC officials acknowledged that the knowledge management decision support tool may help address a challenge that we encountered during our review. Specifically, we requested a list of all the documents that the JRC has reviewed or validated and found numerous discrepancies in the data, including missing documents. Because the new tool is so new, it is too soon to assess whether it will be populated accurately in order to effectively support the new JRIMS process.

JRC officials told us that they also incorporated some other elements from DOD's Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System into the JRIMS process, but not as many as they expected. JRC officials noted that DOD's approach does not fit DHS perfectly for a number of reasons, and it was not their intent to recreate the DOD system at DHS. For example, DHS does not have combatant commands, which DOD uses to organize its operational commands by function and geography and to plan and carry out military operations, nor does it have a Joint

⁸ For examples of our prior work related to DOD's JROC, see: *GAO, Defense Management: Guidance and Progress Measures Are Needed to Realize Benefits from Changes in DOD's Joint Requirements Process*, [GAO-12-339](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 24, 2012); *DOD Weapon Systems: Missed Trade-off Opportunities During Requirements Reviews*, [GAO-11-502](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 16, 2011); and *Defense Acquisitions: DOD's Requirements Determination Process Has Not Been Effective in Prioritizing Joint Capabilities*, [GAO-08-1060](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 25, 2008).

Chiefs of Staff.⁹ A program official also noted that DOD develops more new systems, whereas DHS acquires more systems that can be modified from commercially available items. We spoke with a retired JROC chair and a retired JROC member who shared lessons learned from their experiences that may be relevant to DHS.¹⁰

- To be effective, the JRC must be a leadership priority.
- DHS must understand the culture of its members and look for ways to break down barriers so that each entity is not operating in a silo.
- Having a quick process and cutting down on the length of the requirements documents is important because trying to capture too many details too soon unnecessarily burdens the process of defining the capability gap.
- DHS should not model the JRC after the JROC because DOD and DHS are different and “one size does not fit all.”
- It is important to write requirements in a manner that can later be tested.

JRC officials told us they agreed with these principles and noted that their current approach reflects these recommendations.

⁹ Through the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the military chain of command runs from the President through the Secretary of Defense directly to combatant commanders.

¹⁰ The JROC is chaired by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and includes one senior leader from each of the military services, such as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army or the Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

The JRC's Structure and Management Approach Are Consistent with Key Organizational Transformation Practices, but OCIO Does Not Have a Voting Role

While processes are still new, the JRC's structure and management approach are generally consistent with key practices found at the center of successful mergers and organizational transformations. One challenge that DHS faces is that some of the components and program offices lack the capacity to develop sound requirements. JRC and DMAG officials acknowledged this challenge and plan to take steps to address it, but it will likely take some time to do so. In addition, the OCIO currently serves as a non-voting advisor to the JRC, even though most of DHS's major acquisition programs are information technology (IT) related. Making the OCIO's role more formal could help minimize the risk that programs will begin with poorly developed requirements.

While Processes Are New, the JRC's Structure and Management Approach Are Generally Consistent with Key Organizational Transformation Practices

We assessed the JRC's structure and management approach, such as its membership and the JRIMS process, against eight of the nine key practices consistently found at the center of successful mergers and organizational transformations and determined that the JRC's efforts to stand up its organization are generally consistent with these practices.¹¹ DHS has recently set forth the processes under which the JRC is to guide DHS components in identifying capability gaps and to validate components' proposed solutions to mitigate those gaps. The Under Secretary for Management issued a management directive and associated operational manual in March and April 2016, respectively, establishing the structure and management approach for executing JRIMS. According to the JRIMS management directive, components have the authority to set internal processes and procedures that are consistent with the intent of the JRIMS directive. For example, the Coast Guard already had a mature requirements organization prior to the creation of the current JRC but plans to update its own requirements policies to reflect the JRIMS directive. In addition, the National Protection and Programs Directorate is in the process of developing a joint requirements board that will serve as the governing body for requirements management within the component and support interactions between the Directorate and the JRC.

¹¹ [GAO-03-669](#). We did not assess one of the nine key practices—build a world class organization—because this report has a specific focus; the ninth key practice requires a broader study beyond the scope of this report. For a more detailed discussion concerning our methodology for assessing DHS's application of these key practices, see appendix I of this report.

According to the JRIMS manual, the JRC is to validate capability documents with an eye toward ensuring that the identified capabilities are (1) feasible, (2) cost-informed (i.e., the solution appropriately considers the capability's potential life cycle cost), and (3) can be traced to DHS's strategic guidance. When the JRC reviews a component's Operational Requirements Document (ORD) for validation, it is to assess whether the document reflects when the capability will first be operational and when it will be fully operational, among other things. The JRIMS operational manual, in turn, provides component and program officials with specific guidance for identifying capability gaps and requirements, developing appropriate capability documentation, and obtaining JRC review or validation of those documents, including timelines and checklists for the review process.

Under the JRIMS process, components are to submit two new documents related to capability gaps—the Capability Analysis Study Plan and the Capability Analysis Report. However, only the Capability Analysis Report requires JRC validation.

- The Capability Analysis Study Plan provides notice to the JRC and stakeholders that a component or sponsor is initiating a capability analysis. These plans are intended to provide greater visibility into ongoing studies and assessments, encourage collaboration, leverage existing efforts, and eliminate unnecessary duplication of current study efforts.
- The Capability Analysis Report is an assessment of the department's ability to fulfill a mission, objective, or function and identifies capability gaps, redundancies, fragmentation, and overlaps. This report provides recommendations for either a materiel or non-materiel approach to mitigate those gaps or overlaps.

The JRC also reviews and validates other documentation related to requirements as part of JRIMS:

- Non-Materiel Change Recommendation recommends partially or wholly mitigating an identified capability gap with a non-materiel solution.
- The Mission Needs Statement summarizes specific functional capabilities required to accomplish DHS and component missions and provides the basis for rendering an acquisition decision to proceed to an acquisition program.

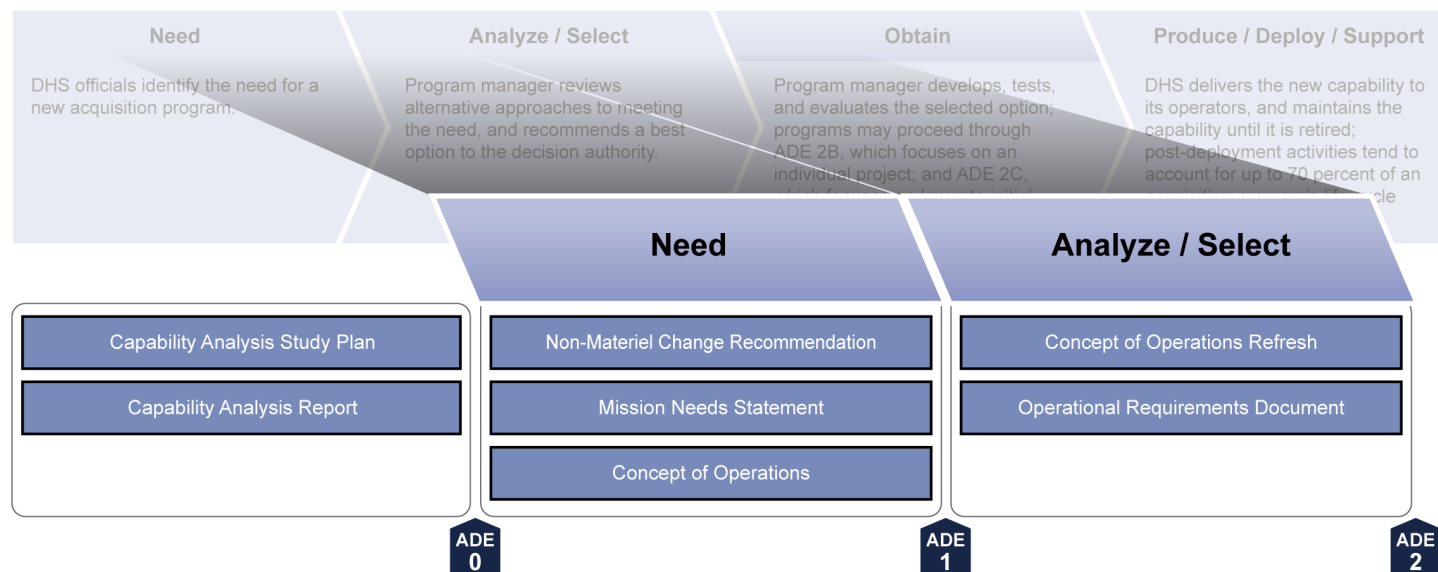
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- The Concept of Operations describes how an asset, system, or capability will be employed and supported. It identifies the capabilities needed to perform the missions and fill the gaps expressed in the Mission Needs Statement, and assists in identifying and selecting solutions in the analysis of alternatives process. The Concept of Operations may need to be updated or refreshed during the Analyze/Select phase of the acquisition life cycle.
 - The Operational Requirements Document identifies the high-level key performance parameters that constitute the operational requirements of the selected solution.

Additionally, two documents were removed from the previous acquisition life cycle framework: the pre-Mission Needs Statement and the pre-Concept of Operations.

According to the JRIMS manual, the timeline for coordinating the review and validation of a properly prepared capability or requirements document should take no more than 80 business days. We attempted to compare the JRC's time frame for reviewing and validating documents with time frames before JRIMS was issued, but DHS officials were unable to provide comparable data. Some program officials expressed concern with the length of the process, but, since JRIMS is just getting underway, it is too early to determine whether this is a reasonable time frame. Figure 3 provides an overview of how key capability and requirements documents are sequenced in relation to the DHS acquisition life cycle framework.

Figure 3: DHS Acquisition Life Cycle and Associated Capability and Requirements Documents

Acquisition phases



ADE Acquisition Decision Event

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Acquisition Life Cycle Framework | GAO-17-171

Our evaluation of the JRC's structure and management approach against the key practices for organizational transformation is presented below. Appendix II contains additional details on the key practices. We shared the key practices with JRC officials who agreed they were relevant to their efforts. At a GAO forum in September 2002, leaders with experience managing large-scale organizational mergers, acquisitions, and transformations identified key practices and lessons learned from major private and public sector organizational mergers, acquisitions, and transformations. These key practices can help agencies transform their cultures so that they can be more results oriented, customer focused, and collaborative. During our examination of the JRC's structure and management approach, we determined that these key practices were important to ensure that the JRC has the framework needed to achieve its goals. To the extent that the JRC maintains its structure and management approach, as represented in the following sections, it will be more likely to sustain its efforts, improve effectiveness and accountability, and maximize its full potential.

Ensure top leadership drives the transformation

DHS senior leaders have defined the need for a joint requirements process at DHS and directed the creation of the JRC. Specifically, the Secretary's 2014 Unity of Effort memorandum tasked the Deputy Secretary to lead an expedited review to provide alternatives for developing and facilitating a component-driven joint requirements process. Subsequently, the Secretary directed the creation of the JRC to allow the department to look at cross-component requirements and develop recommendations for investment priorities. Since the JRC was established in 2014, the Under Secretary for Management has issued several management directives detailing the policy, role, and responsibilities of the JRC, which reinforce the importance of the JRC across DHS.

Establish a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals

In April 2015, the JRC issued a strategic plan that defines its mission and strategic goals. The JRC's mission is to advance the goals of the Secretary of Homeland Security through the creation of a component-driven joint requirements process, thereby building a more unified and operationally effective organization. In addition, the JRC established two strategic goals: (1) identify, validate, and prioritize requirements; and (2) identify areas where DHS can reduce unnecessary duplication, overlap, and redundancy, and prioritize capability options to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations. According to the strategic plan, the mission and strategic goals provide a framework for focusing the JRC's efforts and measuring its success in its first 18 months (fall of 2016).

Focus on a key set of principles and priorities

The JRC has established a set of guiding principles and initial priorities. Specifically, the April 2015 JRC strategic plan identified 11 guiding principles, including focusing on the needs of the operator, addressing priority capability gaps, considering long-term implications of investments, and ensuring a transparent, collaborative, and responsive requirements process. Further, as indicated in the June 2014 memorandum establishing the JRC, the DMAG directed the JRC to initially focus on five priority areas that had an existing governance structure already in place. The priority areas were selected by the DMAG and were sponsored by the components:

1. information-based screening and vetting – Transportation Security Administration;
2. chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear surveillance and detection – U.S. Customs and Border Protection;
3. aviation commonality – U.S. Customs and Border Protection;

-
4. cybersecurity – National Protection and Programs Directorate; and
 5. information sharing – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The JRC formed portfolio teams in each of these initial priority areas to serve as integrators for capabilities within their designated functional areas. Portfolio teams are comprised of subject matter experts from the components and headquarters offices that make independent validation and prioritization recommendations to the JRC. The JRC strategic plan notes that these initial focus areas would likely be modified as the JRC matures. In fact, the JRC is currently restructuring the portfolio teams into seven DHS-wide areas that align better with the department's current priorities. The new portfolio teams are sponsored by a JRC principal from a component or headquarters office and are expected to play a larger role in reviewing component-provided capability and requirements documents, rather than generating the requirements as the original five portfolio teams did. Table 1 provides an overview of the seven current portfolio teams, their functional areas, and their sponsors; it also reflects the changes from the initial set of portfolio teams (shaded in gray).

Table 1: Overview of the Joint Requirements Council's Portfolio Teams, as of March 2016

Portfolio Team	Examples of Functional Areas	Sponsor
Cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze cyber threats and vulnerabilities Monitor and detect cyber threats Intercept and interdict cyber threats 	National Protection and Programs Directorate
Domain and situational awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct homeland security threat, vulnerability, and risk assessments Process and coordinate intelligence activities Facilitate information sharing and safeguarding 	U.S. Coast Guard
Enterprise management support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage agency finances, workforce, legal affairs, information technology, and acquisition of goods and services 	Office of the Chief Information Officer/Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Immigration management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer immigration benefits, user fees, and revenue 	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Incident management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage response, and command and control Provide on-site incident response Provide mid to long-term recovery and restoration assistance 	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical screening and scanning Vet and verify domestic travelers 	Transportation Security Administration
Securing and law enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide protective services Manage detainees Enforce access controls 	U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Source: Department of Homeland Security. | GAO-17-171

Note: shading indicates changes from the initial portfolio teams.

Set implementation goals and a timeline

The JRC has taken steps to build momentum and has shown progress by setting implementation goals and timelines for several of its efforts. First, the April 2015 JRC strategic plan outlined goals and a timeline to achieve the objectives of the five initial portfolio teams. The JRC developed these objectives during the first 6 months of operation and JRC officials plan to start updating the strategic plan in the fall of 2016. Second, the JRC issued a plan with timelines for implementing JRIMS across DHS, as well as a timeline for conducting JRIMS training. We discuss the specifics of JRIMS implementation below. Finally, the JRC is piloting an annual assessment to prioritize emerging and existing program requirements, called the Joint Assessment of Requirements, that began in the spring of 2016. The JRC created a plan that outlines the process for fully implementing the process through fiscal year 2018. The recommendations from the requirements assessment process will ultimately be provided to the DMAG in the spring of 2019. We also discuss the status of and plans for this process later in this report.

Dedicate an implementation team

In addition to the JRC chair, principals, and portfolio team members, the JRC has a team of support staff that includes a director, gatekeeper, program managers, and analysts. The JRC director is responsible for validating JRIMS requirements on behalf of the JRC in accordance with the JRIMS directive and manual. The gatekeeper conducts the initial screening of all capability documentation for compliance with JRIMS standards and format. The JRC and each component have a gatekeeper, which will be a key position going forward for tracking and management purposes. Generally, the support staff—which currently number 16—supports the JRC in its activities and is comprised of permanent employees and officials on detail from the components and headquarters offices, as well as contract support. Specifically, the support staff is tasked with executing the JRIMS process, conducting analysis, screening capability and requirements documents submitted by the components, and making recommendations to the JRC on validating and prioritizing capabilities.

A challenge DHS faces in implementing JRIMS effectively pertains to the components and program offices having the capacity to develop sound requirements. JRC officials, as well as a senior official on the DMAG, acknowledged that the need to increase components' capacity for requirements development is a challenge, and while they plan to take steps to address this issue going forward, it will take some time to do so. In the meantime, the JRC support staff is available to help the components through the process. For their part, component and program officials had differing opinions on whether their capacity was sufficient to develop appropriate capability and requirements documentation and to navigate the JRIMS process. One program official was confident his component would be able to fully implement the JRIMS process because the component was already producing the same documentation and following the same procedures as before the JRC was established. On the other hand, another program official told us that some people in his component are concerned about meeting the additional analysis and documentation requirements associated with JRIMS, such as the Capability Analysis Study Plan or the Capability Analysis Report, which are new. We have previously reported on staffing shortfalls in DHS acquisition programs; however, we cannot fully gauge whether the

components' resource needs are sufficient to follow the JRIMS process until JRIMS is fully implemented.¹²

Use the performance management system to define responsibility and assure accountability

The JRC support staff has responsibilities that are clearly defined by the JRC policies and guidance, and DHS uses its performance management system to help assure accountability for those JRC staff. For example, the JRC director's senior executive performance plan lists core leadership competencies, such as effective communication and collaboration across DHS components, and also links performance objectives to DHS's strategic plan and operational goals. Further, the performance plan for the director of analysis has goals related to organizational transformation, such as implementing the Secretary's unity of effort initiative and integrating JRIMS analysis with DHS's investments. Finally, JRC staff members' performance plans have performance goals that measure how effectively they aid the DHS transition to the joint requirements system, such as delivering training on the JRC and the JRIMS process.

Establish a communication strategy

The JRC developed a communications plan that identifies short-term and long-term objectives for communicating information about the JRC to DHS and component leadership, DHS headquarters offices, and the components, as well as reporting its progress to external entities such as Congress and industry. The communications plan includes the JRC's strategy, tactics, goals, and target audiences, as well as how it will measure success. For example, a measure of success is to reduce the amount of paperwork completed by DHS staff and to reduce the turnaround time of paperwork. The JRC staff issued an update of the communications plan in August 2016, which provides more detail such as defining the roles and responsibilities of the JRC internal players for communicating with stakeholders across DHS.

Involve employees to obtain their ideas and gain ownership

As a component-chaired organization, the JRC was designed to build support from the bottom up. The JRC primarily obtains ideas and expertise from employees across the department through its portfolio teams, which, as discussed above, are built around issues that cut across components. Members of the portfolio teams are directly involved in the JRIMS process through their review of capability and requirements documents. In addition, the JRC's outreach efforts at DHS headquarters, components, and programs provide it with an opportunity to incorporate

¹² GAO, *Homeland Security: DHS Requires More Disciplined Investment Management to Help Meet Mission Needs*, [GAO-12-833](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 18, 2012).

employee feedback into its policies and procedures. For example, the JRC requested that the OCIO gatekeeper facilitate cybersecurity reviews to ensure cybersecurity requirements are addressed, based on feedback from the portfolio teams, OCIO, and the National Protection and Programs Directorate.

In addition, we spoke with officials from 10 major acquisition programs and nine of them told us that they did not have input into developing JRIMS or the Joint Assessment of Requirements process. However, they had a range of opinions about whether the JRC and JRIMS will ultimately strengthen or impede the acquisition process. Some officials stated that there is value in having a headquarters organization look at requirements across all the components, whereas others consider the new process an administrative burden. Although the JRC did not seek input from most program officials we interviewed, it established cross-component working groups to obtain feedback on the JRIMS and Joint Assessment of Requirements processes. JRC officials told us that they incorporated comments from the JRIMS and Joint Assessment of Requirements working groups into those processes and will keep the working groups standing so that they can continue to incorporate feedback in the future. Time will tell how successful the JRC and JRIMS will be, as it is early on and the JRC is still refining its approach.

OCIO Does Not Have a Formal Role on the JRC

The Chief Procurement Officer and the Chief Information Officer serve as non-voting advisors to the JRC. According to the Chief Procurement Officer, her office has provided input on an as-needed basis when the JRC discusses procurement-related topics, and the OCIO has assisted the JRC in making recommendations about IT-related capabilities. Officials from both offices noted that they feel they have been included appropriately in the JRC's activities to date. However, our analysis shows that 24 out of 36 (two-thirds) of DHS's current major acquisition programs are IT-related. We have previously reported that failed IT programs often suffered from a lack of disciplined and effective management, such as requirements definition.¹³ In addition, in our previous work we have identified critical factors underlying successful major acquisitions that support the objective of improving the management of large-scale IT acquisitions across the federal government, including program officials actively engaging with stakeholders, end users and stakeholders involved

¹³ GAO, *High Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-15-290](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 11, 2015).

in the development of requirements, and program staff prioritizing requirements.¹⁴ Under federal standards for internal control, in determining the number of members in an oversight body, the organization considers the need for members to have specialized skills to enable discussion and make appropriate decisions.¹⁵

While the current situation is acceptable to OCIO officials, making the OCIO a principal would ensure more formal and consistent participation—including the ability to vote on JRC decisions related to IT-related investments—as the JRC representatives change in the future. The JRC membership has changed in the past. Specifically, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis was added as a principal to collaborate on intelligence threats. According to the DHS management directive on the JRC, the Secretary of Homeland Security or the DMAG can modify the JRC membership. Without making the OCIO a voting principal on the JRC, opportunities may be missed to minimize the risk that programs will begin with poorly developed requirements and ensure that IT considerations are formally reflected in DHS's capability assessments and requirements for major acquisitions.

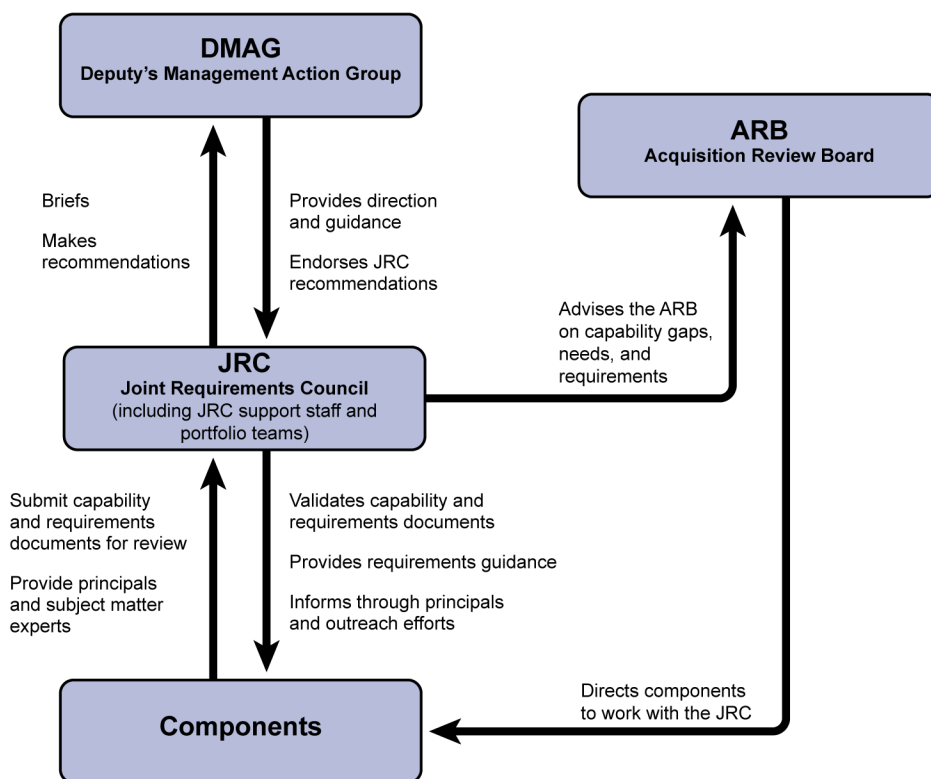
The JRC Engages with DHS Senior Leadership and Components

The JRC's formal process for engaging senior leadership includes briefing the DMAG on JRC activities, participating in ARB meetings, and involving the DHS components through its chair, principals, portfolio teams, and outreach efforts. Figure 4 illustrates the JRC's engagement with the DMAG, ARB, and the components.

¹⁴GAO, *Information Technology: Critical Factors Underlying Successful Major Acquisitions*, [GAO-12-7](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2011).

¹⁵ GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 2014).

Figure 4: JRC's Engagement with the DMAG, ARB, and DHS Components



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy. | GAO-17-171

Since the JRC's creation in 2014, it has engaged with senior leaders by briefing the DMAG approximately every 6 months, or as needed, on the development of JRC's structure and processes, requesting approval from the DMAG on the JRC's planned milestones and the composition of the JRC portfolio teams, and participating in ARB meetings. The DMAG's direction has provided the JRC with some of its short-term focus areas. For example, the DMAG directed the JRC to focus on identifying commonalities between the systems used by components to screen and vet individuals for national security, immigration, and law enforcement purposes, among other things, which the JRC later listed as an objective in its strategic plan. The DMAG has supported the JRC by directing components to provide representation and part-time support to the portfolio teams. Further, the JRC asked the DMAG to discuss JRIMS with other senior leaders, encouraged programs to submit requirements for review during the initial JRIMS rollout, and identified officials from the

components who should attend the JRIMS training. The JRC plans to continue briefing the DMAG in the future.

In addition to its contact with the DMAG, the JRC engages senior leaders through its participation in the ARB. According to the JRC directive, the JRC advises the ARB on capability gaps, needs, and requirements that are the catalyst for investment decisions. The JRC chair told us that the presence of the JRC at the ARBs is intended to ensure that a rigorous analysis of requirements is brought into the discussion at every stage of the acquisition life cycle. For instance, at recent ARB meetings, the JRC chair confirmed that the programs being reviewed had valid capability and requirements documents or engaged with program managers to determine if they had a valid need, particularly if they developed their capabilities and requirements documents before the creation of the JRC in 2014.

The JRC chair position rotates among the seven operational components to help ensure that the activities of the JRC are component-driven and to provide an operational focus to the JRC's work. The former JRC chair, a U.S. Coast Guard official, served for 18 months and the current chair, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection official, started his tenure in December 2015. According to JRC officials, the chair position is not necessarily meant to rotate through all seven of the operational components but could be selected from among any of them by the Secretary. Though the principals may have varying levels of experience in managing major acquisition programs, the rotating chair approach, according to JRC officials, is intended to take advantage of the broad range of skills and expertise of senior officials within the seven operational components. For instance, a JRC official told us that DHS may consider selecting a chair from a component with less experience managing major acquisition programs, such as the U.S. Secret Service, because the component may have officials with the appropriate skills and personality to serve as the JRC chair in the future.

The JRC also engages with the DHS headquarters offices and components through its principals and portfolio teams. JRC principals represent their offices and components' interests to the JRC while also communicating the JRC's efforts back to their offices and components. The JRC meets every month and the JRC chair meets individually with the principals to help foster this flow of communication. In addition, as noted above, the JRC's portfolio teams are staffed by subject matter experts from the headquarters offices and components, who provide the

JRC with additional opportunities to engage the components about new requirements or the requirements process in general.

Finally, the JRC engages with DHS headquarters offices and components through a variety of outreach efforts. For example, the JRC staff has created training courses for officials across all the components and headquarters offices on the JRIMS process and is working to develop a requirements certification program, which will be similar to the certification program currently in place for DHS acquisition professionals.

To gain a better understanding of the level of engagement being experienced to date at the acquisition program level, we spoke with program officials from 10 major acquisition programs. We found that, as of July 2016, officials from 9 of the 10 programs had interacted with the JRC in some way, including working with the JRC to develop requirements documents or attending a training class where the JRC chair presented. Further, program officials from 4 of the 10 programs we interviewed have attended the JRIMS overview training that the JRC began offering in March 2016. Of the remaining six program offices, two officials said that they had no plans to attend training. One of those two officials said that he did not plan to attend training because another office within his component is responsible for developing requirements. The other official who did not plan to attend training stated it was because she already knew who to contact within her component to help her develop requirements.

The JRC Has Begun to Validate Capability and Requirements Documents but Is Still Developing a Process to Inform Decisions on Investment Priorities

The JRC has begun to validate capability and requirements documents, including one joint-ORD, but it is still developing a process to prioritize requirements to inform the DMAG's recommendations on program and budget reviews. To prioritize operational requirements across DHS, the JRC is currently piloting a Joint Assessment of Requirements (JAR) that will tackle emerging requirements first and then existing requirements. The process of prioritizing requirements to inform budget decisions will evolve over time. According to the current plan, the fiscal year 2021 budget request (which begins to be formulated in fiscal year 2018) will be the first time the JRC's work will inform departmental decisions about resource allocation. Further, as the JRC fully implements the processes and procedures it has put in place, one of its goals is to identify areas where DHS can reduce unnecessary duplication, overlap, and redundancy. Our prior work indicates there is potential to do so.

The JRC Has Begun to Identify and Validate Capabilities and Requirements

The JRC has begun to identify and validate capabilities and requirements by reviewing and validating portfolio team or component-produced capability and requirements documents, working with acquisition programs to improve requirements development, and making recommendations to senior leaders. As previously noted, the JRC is now responsible for validating capability and requirements documents for all major acquisition programs in the early part of the acquisition life cycle—to ensure that they align with DHS’s strategic goals, are cost-informed, and feasible—before these documents are sent to the ARB for approval. As of August 2016, the JRC had reviewed or validated 30 capability and requirements documents, including eight mission needs statements and nine ORDs. While the JRIMS guidance envisions that components will initiate the capability assessment process, many of the capability-related documents submitted to the JRC to date have been directed by DHS leadership, such as the ARB. Table 2 lists the capability documents that the JRC has reviewed or validated as of August 2016.

Table 2: Capability and Requirements Documents Reviewed or Validated by the Joint Requirements Council (JRC), as of August 2016^a

Program or Capability Name	Component or Sponsor(s)	Documents and Date of Review or Validation				
		Capability Analysis Study Plan	Capability Analysis Report	Mission Needs Statement	Concept of Operations	Operational Requirements Document
Biodefense Operations at U.S. Ports of Entry	Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Portfolio Team	12/16/2015				
Biowatch	Office of Health Affairs			8/1/2016		
Border Security Domain Awareness	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	6/21/2016				
Coastal Zone Patrol	U.S. Coast Guard	5/23/2016				
Command and Control	U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection	12/15/2015				
Common Enrollment	Transportation Security Administration	10/19/2015				
Common Operating Picture/Common Intelligence Picture/Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance	U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection	12/15/2015				
Department of Homeland Security Secretary Air Transport/In-Flight Communications	U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Federal Emergency Management Agency	10/16/2015				
Financial System Management	Federal Emergency Management Agency			12/28/2015		
Foreign Access Management	Office of the Chief Security Officer	3/30/2016				
Grants Management Modernization	Federal Emergency Management Agency			1/7/2016		
Human Resources Information Technology Portfolio	Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer	3/10/2016				
Inland and Western Rivers Aids to Navigation	U.S. Coast Guard			6/17/2016		
Land Border Integration	U.S. Customs and Border Protection					10/15/2015

Program or Capability Name	Component or Sponsor(s)	Documents and Date of Review or Validation				
		Capability Analysis Study Plan	Capability Analysis Report	Mission Needs Statement	Concept of Operations	Operational Requirements Document
Law Enforcement Information Sharing Environment	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	12/15/2015				
Logistics Supply Chain Management System	Federal Emergency Management Agency					12/16/2015
Maritime Patrol Aircraft Mission System	U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection					4/13/2015
MQ-9 Predator-B Unmanned Air System	U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection	8/1/2015				
Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft	U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection	1/15/2016				10/15/2015 (joint-ORD)
National Cybersecurity Protection System Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation	National Protection and Programs Directorate					6/5/2015
National Flood Insurance Program - Phoenix Program	Federal Emergency Management Agency			8/27/2015		
Non-Intrusive Inspection Systems	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	4/11/2016				
Polar Icebreaker	U.S. Coast Guard					12/21/2015
Replacement Biometrics System/Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology	National Protection and Programs Directorate			6/30/2015		3/7/2016
Revenue Modernization	U.S. Customs and Border Protection			1/20/2016		
Security Technology Integrated Program	Transportation Security Administration					6/4/2015
Streamlined Conveyance Inspections Program	U.S. Customs and Border Protection			11/17/2015		
Verification Modernization	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services					9/1/2015
Total		13	0	8	0	9

Source: Department of Homeland Security. | GAO-17-171

^a According to JRC officials, in some cases, the capability documents that the JRC reviewed were updates to previously-issued capability and requirements documents. Therefore, the JRC may have only reviewed the new document but not the legacy documents. The JRC will be responsible for validating any new capability and requirements documents that are created for these programs in the future.

While JRC officials told us that they designate programs as being “joint” if more than one component has equity in the program, as indicated in the table above, the maritime patrol aircraft mission system is the only validated joint-ORD to date. This ORD was sponsored by the aviation commonality portfolio team, developed by the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and validated by the JRC in April 2015. It establishes requirements for missions systems for fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft that are used by U.S. Customs and Border Protection—the DHC-8, P-3, MQ-9, and the Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft—and the U.S. Coast Guard—the C-27J, HC-144A, HC-130H, and the HC-130J. In April 2015, the DMAG directed these two components to develop plans to implement the joint-ORD—including cost estimates, impact to acquisition programs, and timelines—for any mission system modifications by June 30, 2015. The U.S. Coast Guard’s plan includes all required plan components, and officials told us they plan to complete implementation of the requirements in the joint-ORD for all aircraft by 2024 after completing detailed design and testing a prototype of each aircraft. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s plan, however, consisted only of a brief memorandum and did not include a cost estimate, timeline, or impact to acquisition programs as directed by the DMAG.¹⁶ U.S. Customs and Border Protection plans to conduct feasibility studies on its aircraft as funding becomes available. DHS officials noted that the Office of Program Accountability and Risk Management will continue to monitor the status of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Coast Guard’s implementation of the joint-ORD requirements through the ARB.

As of August 2016, the ARB had directed seven programs to work with the JRC to facilitate collaboration with other components or to identify capability gaps. While these efforts have not identified specific inefficiencies or duplication, the process of assessing capability needs and requirements is intended to help to strengthen acquisition programs in the future by ensuring requirements are feasible, cost-informed, and linked to DHS’s strategic guidance. Table 3 lists the seven programs that

¹⁶ In the memorandum, dated September 18, 2015, U.S. Customs and Border Protection stated that it supports the requirements established in the joint-ORD for future acquisitions and major upgrade initiatives to its maritime aircraft, but it currently has no internally approved initiatives to upgrade or replace mission systems on its DHC-8 or P-3. It further stated that the requested joint-ORD implementation plans will require assessment of current aircraft mission systems to determine modification requirements and that it will begin to conduct feasibility studies on the DHC-8 and P-3 aircraft based on funds available and will provide assessments as data become available.

the ARB directed to work with the JRC, how the program collaborated with the JRC, and the outcome of that work, if completed.

Table 3: Programs That the Acquisition Review Board (ARB) Directed to Work with the Joint Requirements Council (JRC), as of August 2016

Program	Component	ARB Direction	Outcome
Air and Marine Operations Center	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	In August 2015, U.S. Customs and Border Protection was directed to work with the JRC to assess the role of the program in the enterprise command and control situation awareness domain, identify capability gaps, and develop the program's end-state. The ARB directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to schedule a kick-off meeting with the JRC by September 1, 2015.	JRC officials have visited the Air and Marine Operations Center and received several briefings on its capabilities and gaps.
Cross Border Tunnel Threat	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	In September 2015, the ARB directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to provide the JRC with a preliminary Concept of Operations and to coordinate completion of the Analysis of Alternatives study plan with the JRC and other DHS entities.	In September 2015, the program submitted a preliminary Concept of Operations to the JRC and completed coordination with the JRC, among others, on the Analysis of Alternatives.
Grants Management Modernization	Federal Emergency Management Agency	In March 2016, the ARB directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency to work with stakeholders across DHS affected by its Grants Modernization program and report the results of their collaboration efforts to the JRC by July 28, 2016.	The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Component Acquisition Executive is reviewing the report, and will submit it to the JRC following his approval.
Human Resources Information Technology Portfolio	Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer	In January 2016, the ARB directed the program's Executive Steering Committee to reassess the future program requirements and start the pre-Acquisition Decision Event-1 requirements process with the JRC by submitting a Capability Analysis Study Plan no later than February 5, 2016 and a Capability Analysis Report no later than April 30, 2016.	The program submitted a Capability Analysis Study Plan in February 2016 and a Capability Analysis Report in May 2016.
Non-Intrusive Inspection Systems	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	In February 2016, the ARB directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to reassess future requirements for the Non-Intrusive Inspection Systems program and start the requirements process with the JRC by submitting a Capability Analysis Study Plan by March 31, 2016 and a Capability Analysis Report by July 31, 2016.	The program submitted a Capability Analysis Study Plan in March 2016. The deadline for the program to submit the Capability Analysis Report has been extended to December 30, 2016.

Program	Component	ARB Direction	Outcome
Remote Video Surveillance System Upgrade	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	In April 2016, the ARB directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to submit a Capability Analysis Study Plan by April 30, 2016, and a Capability Analysis Report by August 31, 2016. The Capability Analysis Report will explain the need for an affordable and sustainable system in context with other border security technology.	In June 2016, the program submitted a Capability Analysis Study Plan. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials requested an extension for submitting the Capability Analysis Report and the estimated completion date is October 2016.
Strategic Air and Marine Program	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	<p>In January 2015, the ARB directed the program to present an operational justification to the JRC for a requested aircraft mix and laydown for future quantities of Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft.</p> <p>In July 2016, the ARB directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to provide the JRC all existing capability documentation and supporting materials for the Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft, H-60 Helicopter, and Unmanned Aircraft System. The JRC was directed to review and assess these documents by August 1, 2016. In collaboration with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the JRC will advise the Under Secretary for Management by September 30, 2016 on whether these documents sufficiently identify these requirements, the necessary steps to address critical shortfalls, and the mitigation strategies and risks associated with not fulfilling non-critical shortfalls.</p>	<p>In January 2016, the program submitted a Capability Analysis Study Plan. The program submitted a Capability Analysis Report in June 2016.</p> <p>The JRC reviewed the documents by the August deadline as directed.</p>

Source: GAO assessment of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) documents and other information provided by agency officials. | GAO-17-171

In addition to reviewing and validating capability documents and improving requirements development, the JRC intends to make recommendations to the DMAG and ARB to support senior leaders' decision-making. According to JRC officials, much of the JRC's work so far has been focused on establishing its structure and processes and changing the culture of DHS so that components are willing to work together. However, now that the JRIMS manual has been issued, the JRC plans to focus on executing it and making capability and requirements-related recommendations to senior leaders. As of August

2016, the JRC has made three recommendations on capabilities and requirements to senior decision-making bodies.¹⁷

- In January 2015, the ARB directed U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Strategic Marine and Air Program to present an operational justification to the JRC by March 30, 2015 for requested aircraft mix and laydown for future quantities of the Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft prior to receiving authorization to procure additional aircraft. The ARB also directed the JRC to make a recommendation concerning the appropriate number of aircraft by June 30, 2015. In August 2015, the ARB concurred with the JRC's recommendation to procure four aircraft, for a total of 16 Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft. JRC officials stated that their recommendation was based on their finding that additional aircraft were needed and was intended to allow production to continue while the program conducted further analysis to justify additional quantities.
- In April 2015, the JRC recommended to the DMAG that it direct U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Coast Guard to develop implementation plans—including cost estimate, impact to existing acquisition programs, and timeline for implementation—for the joint-ORD for any current or planned mission system modifications. The DMAG concurred with the recommendation.
- In September 2014, DHS initiated an independent study of common enrollment capabilities across the department and hired a contractor to lead the effort. The information-based screening and vetting portfolio team reviewed the study plan and endorsed the contractor's findings. In October 2015, the JRC briefed the DMAG on these findings, proposed pursuing consolidated common enrollment capability, and endorsed the Transportation Security Administration as the component sponsor for this program. The DMAG concurred with this recommendation. The JRC also asked the DMAG to decide on recommendations to the Secretary for common enrollment priorities to be included in the fiscal year 2018-2022 Resource Planning Guidance to drive future funding support.

¹⁷ In addition to the three recommendations on capabilities and requirements, the JRC made eight recommendations to the DMAG on the structure and processes of the JRC. For example, in September 2014, the JRC recommended that the DMAG approve the JRC structure.

The JRC Is Still Developing a Process to Prioritize Requirements across DHS and Make Recommendations on Budget Priorities

The JRC is currently piloting its first JAR, a process that is intended to prioritize the department's new and existing requirements, with the ultimate goal of recommending funding prioritizations to the DMAG to be reflected in budget decisions. Through the JAR process, the JRC is to provide rigorous analysis to senior leaders so they can discuss potential trade-offs and determine which programs to fund, delay, or not pursue. The JRC will evaluate emerging and existing programs' requirements against four criteria considerations—whether they are acceptable, feasible, traceable to the department's unity of effort initiative, and whether they will have the desired effect. Within each criterion, the JRC will consider multiple factors such as the following:

- One of the factors for the feasibility criterion is to assess whether a proposed requirement solution can be executed with current technology.
- One factor for the traceability criterion is to assess whether the requirement solution addresses capability gaps, redundancies, overlaps, and fragmentation.

As part of the JAR process, the portfolio teams, components, and JRC principals plan to rank requirements into three tiers and then make trade-off recommendations to the DMAG. The three tiers are:

- recommend for investment,
- possibly invest, or
- not recommend for investment.

The eventual output of this ranking will evolve over the next 3 years. According to JRC officials, in fiscal year 2016, the JRC identified 8 to 10 emerging requirements to review and prioritize that have entered the Analyze/Select phase, but not the Obtain phase of the acquisition life cycle. In spring 2017, the JRC will provide an informational briefing on the JAR to the DMAG.

The current plan is for the JAR input to reflect all emerging and existing requirements for all major acquisition programs (Levels 1 and 2) and some smaller programs (Level 3) in fiscal year 2018. At that point, information gleaned from the JAR will be briefed to the DMAG in 2019 to inform DHS's fiscal year 2021 budget request. Table 4 depicts how the JRC plans to iteratively implement the JAR from fiscal years 2016 to 2018.

Table 4: Steps for Implementing the Joint Assessment of Requirements (JAR) to Prioritize Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Investments

Year of JAR Review	Fiscal Year 2016	Fiscal Year 2017	Fiscal Year 2018
Acquisition program levels to be included	Levels 1 and 2	Levels 1 and 2	Levels 1, 2, and some 3
Types of requirements JRC will review and prioritize	Limited number (8-10) of emerging	All emerging and all existing	Emerging (all levels) and existing (Levels 1 and 2)
Planned outcome	Provide informational briefing to the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG) in spring 2017	Provide informational briefing to the DMAG in spring 2018	Brief DMAG in spring 2019 to inform fiscal year 2021 budget request

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data and discussions with agency officials. | GAO-17-171

DHS officials told us they will establish guidance on the nexus between the JAR and the budget planning process within the department. They recognize that such guidance, as well as sustained management attention to implementing the JAR, will be important to keeping the momentum going so that the JRC's insights can inform the department's budget priorities by identifying areas where DHS can reduce unnecessary duplication and prioritizing requirements on an annual basis. However, since full implementation of the JAR—and its use to inform the department's budget decisions—is years away, it is too soon to tell how effective it will be in prioritizing requirements and reducing duplication and inefficiencies, as intended.

In addition to prioritizing requirements to inform budget requests, a goal of the JRC is to identify overlapping or duplicative requirements across the department. Our prior work shows there is potential in this regard. For example, in 2008, we reported that the first iteration of the JRC had played a key role in identifying several overlapping investments, including passenger screening programs.¹⁸ Specifically, in March 2006, the JRC identified programs that had potential overlaps, including the Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight, the Transportation Security Administration's Registered Traveler, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Consolidated Registered Traveler programs. We reported that, because the JRC stopped meeting soon thereafter, DHS may have missed opportunities to follow up on these cases or identify further cases of potential overlap. We also reported that U.S. Citizenship

¹⁸ [GAO-09-29](#).

and Immigration Services' Transformation program had been conducted in an ad hoc and decentralized manner, and, in certain instances, was duplicative with other information technology investments.¹⁹ DHS's 2007 assessment of 37 major investments also identified potential overlap and duplication of effort between investments. For example, DHS found that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Verification Information System had potential duplication of requirements with National Protection and Programs Directorate's U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team investment. Going forward, as the JRC begins to fully implement the processes and procedures it has put in place, senior officials recognize the importance of sustained management attention to reduce duplication and inefficiencies.

Conclusions

The re-establishment of the JRC after many years without such an active body is a positive demonstration of senior-level commitment to improving the DHS-wide capabilities and requirements processes. The JRC has the potential to help DHS reduce duplication and make cost-effective investments across its portfolio, although specific outcomes will not materialize in terms of budget decisions in the short term. In the meantime, DHS must make sure that the OCIO is formally incorporated as a principal into the JRC, since a significant number of major acquisition programs are IT-related. While, according to OCIO officials, the current situation is working well, if the OCIO is not a voting member of the JRC, it may miss opportunities to weigh in on important trade-off discussions and prioritization decisions as different officials come into the role.

Recommendation for Executive Action

We are making the following recommendation to the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure that the JRC has members with the skills to enable discussion and make appropriate decisions:

- Direct the JRC to make the OCIO a principal of the JRC, given that the majority of DHS's major acquisition programs are IT-related.

¹⁹ GAO, *USCIS Transformation: Improvements to Performance, Human Capital, and Information Technology Management Needed as Modernization Proceeds*, [GAO-07-1013R](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 17, 2007).

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this product to DHS for comment. In its written comments, reproduced in appendix III, DHS concurred with our findings and recommendation, and expects to implement the recommendation by October 31, 2016.

DHS also provided technical comments that we incorporated into the report as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of DHS. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4841 or mackinm@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.



Michele Mackin
Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management

List of Requesters

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Scott Perry
Chairman
The Honorable Bonnie Watson Coleman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
United States Senate

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this review was to assess the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Joint Requirements Council (JRC). We (1) described the factors the JRC assessed when establishing DHS's joint requirements system; (2) assessed the extent to which the JRC's management approach is consistent with our key practices for mergers and organizational transformations; (3) assessed the extent of the JRC's engagement with senior leadership and DHS components; and (4) assessed the extent to which the JRC has validated capability and requirements documents and begun to inform DHS's investment priorities.

To assess the factors JRC assessed when establishing DHS's joint requirements system and the extent to which its structure and management approach is consistent with key practices for organizational transformation, we reviewed relevant policies and procedures, including the JRC charter, Manual for the Operations of the Joint Requirements Integration and Management System (JRIMS), DHS management directives on the JRC and JRIMS, JRC strategic plan, and DHS Acquisition Management Directive 102 Series, as well as DHS management memoranda such as the Secretary's April 2014 memorandum on strengthening DHS's unity of effort and the Secretary's June 2014 memorandum directing the creation of the JRC. In addition, we reviewed the JRC's December 2014 study that assessed the required elements of a joint requirements system. We spoke with knowledgeable officials, including the former and current JRC chairs, about the factors JRC considered when establishing its joint requirements system. We interviewed all 13 JRC principals, JRC support staff, representatives from all five original portfolio teams, and component officials about, among other things, their roles on the JRC and its structure and management. We also met with the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer to learn about their roles on the JRC. In addition, we interviewed the former chair and a former member of the Department of Defense's Joint Requirements Oversight Council to obtain lessons learned and best practices from their experiences in a joint requirements organization.

To assess the extent to which the JRC's structure and management approach is consistent with key practices, we identified key practices that GAO has found to be at the center of successful mergers and

organizational transformations.¹ Although the GAO report on key practices for transformation listed nine practices, we found that eight of the nine had the most relevance to our review. We did not assess one of the nine key practices—build a world class organization—because this report has a specific focus and the ninth key practice requires a broader study beyond the scope of this report. For the other eight key practices, we determined the extent to which DHS is following them by comparing them to the JRC’s structure and management approach. Specifically, we reviewed the policies and procedures described above, analyzed interviews with DHS, JRC, component, and program officials, and examined any differences.

To assess the extent of the JRC’s engagement with senior leadership and DHS components, we examined relevant documents including the DHS Acquisition Management Directive 102 Series, JRC strategic plan, and Deputy’s Management Action Group (DMAG) meeting minutes. We interviewed JRC staff, JRC principals, portfolio team members, and the former and current JRC chairs. We also interviewed officials from component-level organizations including officials from the National Protection and Program Directorate’s Joint Requirements Board and the U.S. Coast Guard’s Capability Directorate (CG-7). We identified JRC’s effort by analyzing policies and procedures, such as those listed above, as well as the JRC communications plan and the JRC staff’s performance plans. We also reviewed interviews from relevant officials, such as the JRC chair, staff, and principals as well as selected program managers.

To assess the extent to which JRC has reviewed or validated capability and requirements documents and begun to inform DHS’s investment priorities, we examined the capability and requirements documents that the JRC has reviewed or validated, including capability analysis study plans, mission needs statements, and operational requirements documents and documentation that described JRC’s planned Joint Assessment of Requirements. We examined the JRC’s goals in the 2015-2016 JRC Strategic Plan. We also examined acquisition decision memoranda that directed the JRC to take action or directed a program to initiate the creation of a capability document with the JRC. We spoke with a member of the DMAG to ascertain how the DMAG plans to use JRC’s recommendations from the Joint Assessment of Requirements to inform the DHS budget process, among other things. We also interviewed JRC

¹ [GAO-03-669](#).

staff, JRC principals, portfolio team members, and the former and current JRC chairs about the development, review, and validation of capability and requirements documents by the JRC. In addition, we spoke with officials from the components, including officials from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Office and Air and Marine Operations to ascertain their role in developing the joint-operational requirements document, among other things. We spoke with JRC staff and JRC principals about the development of the Joint Assessment of Requirements.

To inform all of our objectives, we obtained the perspective of program offices at DHS. To do so, we selected a non-representative sample of 10 major acquisition programs that had at least one capability or requirements document validated or reviewed by the JRC or was pre-acquisition decision event 2A, which is the point immediately before an acquisition program enters the Obtain phase of the acquisition life cycle. To identify a list of programs, we obtained and analyzed data from the JRC for 27 major acquisition programs which had a capability or requirements document validated or reviewed by the JRC and the types of documents reviewed by the JRC for each program, among other things. In addition, we obtained and analyzed data from DHS's Office of Program Accountability and Risk Management that listed all major acquisition programs that were pre-acquisition decision event 2A. To assess the reliability of the data, we interviewed knowledgeable agency officials about the data and shared the data with the program managers or program-manager equivalents of the selected programs to confirm or correct it. Furthermore, for the JRC-provided data on acquisition programs and specific capability documents it had reviewed, we reviewed these data for completeness and obvious errors by comparing the data with the capability documents we previously obtained from the JRC. We found that the list of programs provided by the JRC was not comprehensive and contained numerous discrepancies. We worked with the JRC staff to correct these discrepancies before selecting programs for our sample. After taking these steps, we determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of selecting our sample of programs.

In selecting programs for our sample, from the list of programs provided by the JRC, we used four criteria: (1) the component sponsor, (2) portfolio team assignment, (3) acquisition phase, and (4) the JRC designation as single component, joint, or DMAG interest. We selected programs so that our sample included a mix of these characteristics. For the list of programs provided by the Office of Program Accountability and Risk Management, only two out of the five programs listed were not already

included in the JRC-provided list. As a result, we selected those two programs. We selected the following major acquisition programs:

- U.S. Customs and Border Protection - Cross Border Tunnel Threat
- Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer - Human Resources Information Technology Portfolio
- Federal Emergency Management Agency - Logistics Supply Chain Management System
- U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection - Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft Mix and Laydown
- National Protection and Programs Directorate - National Cybersecurity Protection System/Continuous Diagnostics & Mitigation
- U.S. Coast Guard - Polar Icebreaker
- National Protection and Programs Directorate - Replacement Biometrics System/Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology
- Transportation Security Administration - Security Technology Integrated Program
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services - Verification Modernization

After selecting our sample, we spoke with program managers or their equivalents to ascertain the extent of their contact with the JRC, whether or not they have attended or plan to attend training for JRIMS, and their opinions on whether the JRC strengthens or impedes the acquisitions process, among other things.

We conducted this performance audit from November 2015 to October 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Key Practices and Implementation Steps for Mergers and Organizational Transformations

Table 5: Key Practices and Implementation Steps for Mergers and Organizational Transformations

Key Practice	Implementation Steps
Ensure top leadership drives the transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and articulate a succinct and compelling reason for change. Balance continued delivery of services with merger and transformation activities.
Establish a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals to guide the transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt leading practices for results-oriented strategic planning and reporting.
Focus on a key set of principles and priorities at the outset of the transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed core values in every aspect of the organization to reinforce the new culture.
Set implementation goals and a timeline to build momentum and show progress from day one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make public implementation goals and timeline. Seek and monitor employee attitudes and take appropriate follow-up actions. Identify cultural features of merging organizations to increase understanding of former work environments. Attract and retain key talent. Establish an organization-wide knowledge and skills inventory to exchange knowledge among merging organizations.
Dedicate an implementation team to manage the transformation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish networks to support implementation team. Select high-performing team members.
Use the performance management system to define responsibility and assure accountability for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt leading practices to implement effective performance management systems with adequate safeguards.
Establish a communication strategy to create shared expectations and report related progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate early and often to build trust. Ensure consistency of message. Encourage two-way communication. Provide information to meet specific needs of employees.
Involve employees to obtain their ideas and gain ownership for the transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use employee teams. Involve employees in planning and sharing performance information. Incorporate employee feedback into new policies and procedures. Delegate authority to appropriate organizational levels.
Build a world-class organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt leading practices to build a world-class organization.

Source: [GAO-03-669](#).| GAO-17-171

Note: We did not assess one of the nine key practices—build a world class organization—because this report has a specific focus and the ninth key practice requires a broader study beyond the scope of this report.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

October 14, 2016

Ms. Michele Mackin
Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management's Response to Draft Report GAO-17-171, "HOMELAND SECURITY ACQUISITIONS: Joint Requirements Council's Initial Approach Is Generally Sound and It Is Developing a Process to Inform Investment Priorities"

Dear Ms. Mackin:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

DHS is pleased to note GAO's positive recognition that the creation of a new Joint Requirements Council (JRC) just over 2 years ago "... is a positive demonstration of senior-level commitment to improving the DHS-wide capabilities and requirements processes." As Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson has previously stated: "The strategic decisions of the Department's senior leadership are only as good as the processes that support and give effect to those decisions in investments and in the conduct of operations."

The component-led, component-driven JRC has produced tangible benefits by helping refine and integrate mission requirements to enhance operational effectiveness directly and better inform the department's main investment pillars, the program and budget review and the acquisition review process. Ultimately, the JRC is about ensuring the field has the right capabilities at the right time to complete the Department's missions safely and effectively. Through the JRC and other related initiatives, DHS will continue to build and sustain a culture that supports unified efforts to successfully fulfill its broad and challenging missions which are so vital to the security of the Nation.

The draft report contained one recommendation with which the Department concurs. Attached find our detailed response to the recommendation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Attachment

**Attachment: DHS Management Response to the Recommendation Contained
in Draft Report (GAO-17-171)**

GAO recommended that the Secretary of Homeland Security:

Recommendation: Direct the JRC to make the OCIO [Office of Chief Information Officer] a principal of the JRC, given that the majority of DHS's major acquisition programs are IT-related.

Response: Concur. DHS Directive 071-02 "The Joint Requirements Council" designates JRC membership and notes that the membership can be modified by the DHS Secretary or the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG). The DHS Secretary delegated authority to modify JRC membership to the JRC Chair in DHS Delegation 00008, "Delegation to the Chair, Joint Requirements Council." The JRC Chair intends to gain JRC members endorsement for adding OCIO as a principal member of the JRC during a meeting to be held on October 17, 2016. Following JRC membership endorsement, the JRC Chair will sign a memorandum formally modifying JRC membership. Estimated Completion Date: October 31, 2016.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Michele Mackin, (202) 512-4841 or mackinm@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Katherine Trimble, Assistant Director; Leigh Ann Haydon, Analyst-in-Charge; Lindsay Taylor; and Jenny Chow made key contributions to this report. Lorraine Ettaro, Stephanie Gustafson, Oziel Trevino, Sarah Veale, and Marie Ahearn also provided assistance in developing this report.

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