



October 2017

COAST GUARD

Actions Needed to Enhance Performance Information Transparency and Monitoring

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-13](#), a report to congressional committees.

Why GAO Did This Study

The Coast Guard, within DHS, is responsible for, among other things, protecting the marine environment and guarding the nation's vast coastline and ports. Using performance goals—comprised of measures, timeframes, and targets—the Coast Guard assesses and communicates its performance.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015 included a provision for GAO to review the Coast Guard's performance goals. This report examines: (1) the extent the Coast Guard developed and reported goals that align with each of its missions and address core activities, (2) the extent the Coast Guard and DHS have processes to ensure that data for selected goals are reliable, and (3) the explanations and corrective actions the Coast Guard reported for selected met and unmet goals during fiscal years 2011 through 2015. GAO reviewed applicable laws, policies, and guidance. GAO reviewed the reliability and results of 7 of the Coast Guard's 38 performance goals to include a variety of performance results, data sources, and missions, and interviewed Coast Guard and DHS officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Coast Guard develop new performance goals or describe how existing goals are sufficient, publicly report its goals, assess the extent limitations in performance data are documented, document measurable corrective actions and implementation time frames, as well as document efforts to monitor implementation of corrective actions. DHS concurred with all five recommendations.

View [GAO-18-13](#). For more information, contact Jennifer Grover at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov.

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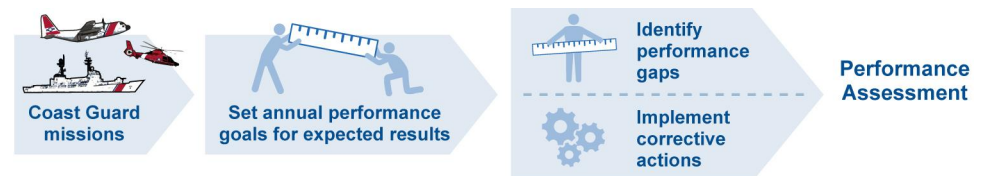
COAST GUARD

Actions Needed to Enhance Performance Information Transparency and Monitoring

What GAO Found

The U.S. Coast Guard's (Coast Guard) performance goals generally align with its 11 statutory missions. However, GAO found that the goals representing 5 of the 11 missions do not fully address all related mission activities. For example, despite the Coast Guard's mission to interdict all illegal drugs, the agency's two performance goals related to that mission are for cocaine interdiction only, excluding many other substances. Developing new goals to address missions, or describing how existing goals sufficiently assess mission performance, could better convey the Coast Guard's progress in achieving its missions to decision makers and the public. The Coast Guard also does not report all of its performance goals in publicly available documents, limiting congressional and public awareness of the Coast Guard's ability to meet its missions.

Figure: Elements of the Coast Guard's Performance Assessment Process



Source: GAO. | GAO-18-13

The Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have processes intended to ensure the reliability of performance data for the seven selected goals that GAO reviewed. However, the Coast Guard does not consistently document its data limitations for internal and external audiences. For example, the Coast Guard did not document limitations with its performance goal regarding the number of detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels violating U.S. waters. While the Coast Guard reported taking steps to address data limitations with two of the seven selected performance goals that GAO reviewed, the extent of such limitations are not clearly documented. Assessing the extent to which performance data limitations are documented could provide greater transparency regarding the reliability of these data.

Additionally, for the same selected seven goals, GAO found that the Coast Guard documented an explanation for why it did or did not meet each performance goal reported to DHS, as well as corrective actions for each unmet goal. However, the Coast Guard's corrective actions were not measurable and did not include time frames for implementation. For example, the Coast Guard did not report measureable actions or time frames for evaluating whether additional resources were needed to address its cocaine interdiction goal. The Coast Guard also did not document its efforts to monitor whether the corrective actions it developed for unmet performance goals were implemented or evaluate whether they had the intended effect. Documenting these efforts could enable the Coast Guard to determine whether these actions have been implemented, if they have mitigated any performance gaps, and continue to plan and prioritize its operations to target performance gaps, which is consistent with federal standards for internal control.

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Abbreviations

APR	Annual Performance Report
CBJ	Congressional Budget Justification
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FYHSP	Future Years Homeland Security Program
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
GPRAMA	GPRA Modernization Act of 2010
MISLE	Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement
MSRAM	Maritime Security Risk Analysis Model
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PMDF	Performance Measure Definition Form

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October 27, 2017

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard) serves as the principal federal agency responsible for maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship in U.S. ports and waterways. In this capacity, the Coast Guard protects and defends more than 100,000 miles of U.S. coastline and inland waterways, and safeguards an economic region covering 4.5 million square miles. As one of the five Armed Services of the United States, the Coast Guard is the only military branch within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In addition, the Coast Guard serves as a first responder and humanitarian service that provides aid to people in distress or impacted by natural and man-made disasters whether at sea or on shore. The Coast Guard's 11 primary statutory missions identified in

the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, encompass the agency's important roles and responsibilities.¹

To ensure that the Coast Guard is effectively meeting its missions, agency managers must have accurate and reliable performance information to monitor and track the progress they are making on achieving their goals. However, questions have been raised about whether annual performance goals and reported performance information accurately reflect the extent to which the Coast Guard is accomplishing its mission responsibilities.² Our prior work and the work of others have identified challenges related to the Coast Guard's performance management efforts. For example, in 2009, we reported that the development of applicable performance measures to evaluate the Coast Guard's modernization program results remained in the early stages.³

¹The Coast Guard's 11 missions outlined in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 include: marine safety; search and rescue; marine environmental protection; ports, waterways, and coastal security; drug interdiction; alien migrant interdiction; living marine resources; other law enforcement; aids to navigation; ice operations; and defense readiness. 6 U.S.C. § 468(a). The Coast Guard has other mission responsibilities not explicitly delineated in the Homeland Security Act, including products and services for the intelligence community; activities and efforts provided in support of U.S. diplomacy and international relations; bridge administration, Great Lakes pilotage and other waterways management functions supplementary to aids to navigation. According to Coast Guard officials, some of its missions are outlined in statutes other than the Homeland Security Act of 2002. For the purposes of this report, we use statutory missions to refer to the 11 missions outlined in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.

²Throughout this report we use the term performance goal, which the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 define as comprising a measure, a target, and a time frame. This is the term that most federal agencies use to assess and report performance. However, DHS and the Coast Guard use the term performance measure instead of performance goal to distinguish its performance measures from high level mission goals. Since DHS and the Coast Guard use the term performance measure as also comprising a measure, target and a time frame, they have all the elements of what we consider to be a performance goal, and therefore we evaluated them as such.

³GAO, *Coast Guard: Observations on the Genesis and Progress of the Service's Modernization Program*, [GAO-09-530R](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2009).

More recently, in 2016, we reported that the Coast Guard did not provide field units with realistic goals to allocate their limited resources.⁴

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015 included a provision for GAO to review the Coast Guard's performance goals.⁵ This report addresses (1) the extent to which the Coast Guard has developed and reported annual performance goals that align with each of its missions and address core activities, (2) the extent to which the Coast Guard and DHS have processes to ensure that the Coast Guard's data for selected annual performance goals are reliable, and (3) the explanations and corrective actions the Coast Guard reported for selected met and unmet annual performance goals during fiscal years 2011 through 2015.

To determine the extent to which the Coast Guard developed and reported annual performance goals that align with each of its missions and address core activities, we reviewed applicable laws governing performance reporting in the federal government, including the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), as updated and expanded by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA),⁶ and

⁴GAO, *Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Allocation of Assets and Determine Workforce Requirements*, [GAO-16-379](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 24, 2016). We recommended that the Coast Guard, among other things, incorporate field unit input to inform its allocation decisions and to develop a systematic process that prioritizes the most critical manpower requirements analyses to complete. DHS concurred with the recommendations and stated it is taking actions to implement them. See also GAO, *Coast Guard: Relationship between Resources Used and Results Achieved Needs to Be Clearer*, [GAO-04-432](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 22, 2004). The Coast Guard implemented our recommendations for providing the Coast Guard and Congress with critical information necessary for an efficient and effective allocation of resources. See also *Coast Guard: Non-Homeland Security Performance Measures Are Generally Sound, but Opportunities for Improvement Exist*, [GAO-06-816](#) (Washington, D.C.: August 16, 2006) for other challenges we have identified with Coast Guard's performance measures. The Coast Guard implemented our recommendations to clarify, develop targets, establish criteria, and review external data for certain performance measures and improve the Coast Guard's overall reporting of results.

⁵The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2015 included a provision requiring that GAO provide an assessment of the efficacy of the Coast Guard's Standard Operational Planning Process with respect to annual mission performance goals to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Homeland Security, U.S. House of Representatives, and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, U.S. Senate, within one year of the enactment of the Act. See Pub. L. No. 114-120, § 211, 130 Stat. 27, 42 (2016). To meet the deadline for this mandate, we provided preliminary findings information to the committees on February 7, 2017 and in agreement with your staff, are presenting our final findings in this report.

⁶Pub. L. No. 111-352, 124 Stat. 3866 (2011). GPRAMA amends the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62, 107 Stat. 285 (1993).

guidance for implementing these laws. Although GPRA and GPRAMA requirements apply to those goals reported by departments (e.g., DHS), we have previously reported that they can serve as leading practices at other organizational levels, such as component agencies (e.g., the Coast Guard) for performance management.⁷ We also reviewed practices used by high-performing organizations related to performance goal alignment and performance reporting, identified through our past work,⁸ which could be useful for management and congressional decision making and informing the public. In addition, we reviewed Coast Guard and DHS documents related to the Coast Guard's process for developing and reporting its annual performance goals. These documents included policies and guidance regarding how the Coast Guard's process is to operate, as well as documents used to communicate annual performance goal information, including the Coast Guard's program performance plans and annual performance reports (APRs), as well as DHS's APRs and congressional budget justification documents.⁹ To further understand the Coast Guard's processes for developing and revising annual performance goals, we interviewed officials from the Coast Guard's Office of Performance Management and Assessment, DHS's Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation, and DHS's Office of Policy.¹⁰ Further, we analyzed the extent to which the 38 performance goals in the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 APR align with the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions and address core mission activities.¹¹ To conduct our analysis,

⁷GAO, *Environmental Justice: EPA Needs to Take Additional Actions to Help Ensure Effective Implementation*, [GAO-12-77](#), (Washington, D.C.: October 6, 2011) and *Motor Carriers: Better Information Needed to Assess Effectiveness and Efficiency of Safety Interventions*, [GAO-17-49](#), (Washington, D.C.: October 27, 2016).

⁸GAO, *Highlights of a GAO Forum: High Performing Organizations: Metrics, Means, and Mechanisms for Achieving High Performance in the 21st Century Public Management Environment*, [GAO-04-343SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 13, 2004).

⁹The Coast Guard's program performance plans are intended to meet GPRA requirements for annual performance plans, which are to include performance goals for measuring program outcomes. The Coast Guard's most recent program performance plans were published in August 2013, and cover fiscal years 2014 through 2019.

¹⁰The Coast Guard's Office of Performance Management and Assessment coordinates performance management across the Coast Guard. DHS's Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation coordinates performance management across DHS components. DHS's Office of Policy develops strategies, operational plans, and leads the development of operational and resource allocation guidance for the department, among other things.

¹¹Although our analysis focused on the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 APR—the most current APR when we began our review—we also reviewed the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR, and noted any changes from the fiscal year 2015 APR.

we relied primarily on criteria that we had previously developed based on GPRA requirements and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines for agency performance goals.¹² In addition, we evaluated the results of our analysis against criteria in *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*.¹³ Furthermore, we reviewed the extent to which the Coast Guard's annual performance goals are reported to the public and Congress and compared them to GPRAMA requirements, which may serve as leading practices for the Coast Guard.¹⁴

To determine the extent to which the Coast Guard and DHS have processes to ensure that the Coast Guard's data for selected annual performance goals are reliable, we reviewed 7 of the 38 performance goals in the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 APR. We selected these goals to include a variety of performance results as reported in the Coast Guard's APRs from fiscal years 2011 through 2015, data sources, and Coast Guard missions.¹⁵ Our analysis assessed only the specific processes and practices used to collect and report data for the seven selected performance goals and not the relevant databases as a whole. The information we obtained for selected Coast Guard performance goals is not generalizable, but provides valuable perspectives on its processes for ensuring data reliability. We reviewed Coast Guard and DHS information, including APRs for fiscal year 2015;¹⁶ available guidance for reporting on operational and performance data; Performance Measure Definition Forms—which provide information on data reliability, among other things; and studies sponsored by DHS that examine the reliability

¹²GAO, *The Results Act: An Evaluator's Guide to Assessing Agency Performance Plans*, [GAO/GGD-10-1.20](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 1998).

¹³GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 2014).

¹⁴31 U.S.C. §§ 1115(b), 1116(a).

¹⁵The 7 selected performance goals include (1) percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment, (2) number of detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels violating U.S. waters, (3) removal rate for cocaine from non-commercial vessels in the maritime transit zone, (4) percent of undocumented migrants attempting to enter the United States by maritime routes interdicted by the Coast Guard, (5) percent of time high priority waterways in the Great Lakes and along the eastern seaboard are open during ice season, (6) percent reduction of all maritime security risk subject to the Coast Guard's influence, and (7) five-year average number of recreational boating deaths and injuries.

¹⁶Although our analysis focused on fiscal year 2015, we also reviewed the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR, which included an additional appendix describing the reliability of performance goals.

and validity of performance data. We interviewed Coast Guard officials from the Office of Performance Management and Assessment, officials at program offices responsible for managing the selected performance goals,¹⁷ and field officials from the Atlantic and Pacific Area Commands. In addition, we observed Coast Guard officials demonstrating how they enter operational and performance data into the Coast Guard's and DHS's information systems, as well as features of these systems intended to help ensure data reliability. We also interviewed officials from DHS's Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation to obtain information on their processes for ensuring data reliability and providing oversight of the Coast Guard's performance management. We then compared the Coast Guard's and DHS's processes for ensuring data reliability against criteria in *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* and GPRAMA requirements.¹⁸

To determine the extent to which the Coast Guard reported explanations for met and unmet annual performance goals during fiscal years 2011 through 2015 and developed corrective actions for selected unmet goals, we reviewed the same seven Coast Guard performance goals selected for review as described above. We reviewed documents describing the Coast Guard's performance results for fiscal years 2011 through 2015, along with explanations for met or unmet goals, and corrective actions for unmet goals. These documents include the Coast Guard's program performance plans, Strategic Planning Direction, Coast Guard and DHS APRs, and information from DHS's Future Years Homeland Security Program system—a department-wide database used to collect performance information. To obtain additional perspectives on explanations and corrective actions, we interviewed Coast Guard headquarters and field officials, and DHS headquarters officials. We reviewed Coast Guard and DHS processes for ensuring data reliability, as described above, to determine whether the performance data for the seven selected goals were sufficiently reliable for our reporting purposes. We determined that the performance data for one of the seven goals—five year average number of recreational boating deaths and injuries goal—was not sufficiently reliable for our reporting purposes. As a result, a discussion of explanations and corrective actions for that goal is not included in this report. We determined that the performance data for the

¹⁷The Coast Guard implements its 11 statutory missions through six programs. Program offices have primary responsibility for managing their respective performance goals.

¹⁸[GAO-14-704G](#) and 31 U.S.C. §§ 1115(b)(8), 1116(c)(6).

remaining six selected goals was sufficiently reliable for our reporting purposes. We evaluated the Coast Guard's efforts for reporting corrective actions against *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* and leading practices found in GPRAMA requirements.¹⁹

We conducted this performance audit from January 2016 to October 2017 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

Coast Guard's Role, Statutory Missions and Mission Programs

With a staff of over 47,000 members, the Coast Guard operates a multimission fleet of 201 fixed and rotary-wing aircraft and over 1,400 boats and ships.²⁰ Operational control of surface and air assets is divided into two geographic Areas (Pacific and Atlantic), nine Districts, and 35 Sector Commands located at ports throughout the country. The Coast Guard's program oversight, policy development, and personnel administration are carried out at the Coast Guard's headquarters. As shown in table 1, the Coast Guard is responsible for 11 statutory missions identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended. The Coast Guard manages these missions through six mission programs, also listed in table 1.

¹⁹[GAO-14-704G](#) and 31 U.S.C. §§ 1116(c)(3)(C), 1116(g).

²⁰In addition to the 47,000 members of the Coast Guard military component (active and reserve), Coast Guard officials reported that about 8,500 civilians support the Coast Guard in both field and staff positions, and these staff are further supplemented by approximately 26,500 volunteer members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Table 1: Information on the Coast Guard's Mission Programs and 11 Statutory Missions

	Statutory Mission^a	Description
Maritime security operations	Ports, waterways, and coastal security (response activities)	Ensure the security of the waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and the waterways, ports, and intermodal landside connections that comprise the marine transportation system and protect those who live or work on the water or who use the maritime environment for recreation.
Maritime law enforcement	Migrant interdiction	Stem the flow of undocumented alien migration and human smuggling activities via maritime routes.
	Drug interdiction	Stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.
	Living marine resources	Enforce laws governing the conservation, management, and recovery of living marine resources, marine protected species, and national marine sanctuaries and monuments.
	Other law enforcement	Enforce international treaties, including the prevention of illegal fishing in international waters and the dumping of plastics and other marine debris.
Maritime prevention	Ports, waterways, and coastal security (prevention activities)	Ensure the security of the waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and the waterways, ports, and intermodal landside connections that comprise the marine transportation system and protect those who live or work on the water or who use the maritime environment for recreation.
	Marine safety	Enforce laws which prevent death, injury, and property loss in the marine environment.
	Marine environmental protection (prevention activities)	Enforce laws which deter the introduction of invasive species into the maritime environment, stop unauthorized ocean dumping, and prevent oil and chemical spills.
Maritime response	Search and rescue	Search for, and provide aid to, people who are in distress or imminent danger.
	Marine environmental protection (response activities)	Respond to oil and chemical spills.
Defense operations	Defense readiness	Maintain the training and capability necessary to immediately integrate with Department of Defense forces in both peacetime operations and during times of war.
Marine transportation system management	Aids to navigation	Mitigate the risk to safe navigation by providing and maintaining more than 51,000 buoys, beacons, lights, and other aids to mark channels and denote hazards.
	Ice operations	Establish and maintain tracks for critical waterways, assist and escort vessels beset or stranded in ice, and remove navigational hazards created by ice in navigable waterways.

Source: The Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13

^aThe Coast Guard divides responsibilities for 2 of the 11 missions into separate Coast Guard programs. Specifically, the Ports Waterways and Coastal Security mission encompasses the Maritime Security Operations response activities and Maritime Prevention activities. Similarly, the Marine Environmental Protection mission encompasses the Maritime Response program activities and Maritime Prevention activities. The Coast Guard has other mission responsibilities not explicitly delineated in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended. These include products and services for the Intelligence Community; activities and efforts to support U.S. diplomacy and international relations, Bridge Administration, Great Lakes Pilotage, and other Waterways Management functions supplementary to providing Aids to Navigation.

GPRA Requirements and Overview of the Coast Guard's Processes for Developing Performance Goals

GPRA requires agencies to establish annual performance goals with target levels of performance to measure progress towards those goals.²¹ In addition, GPRA requires executive agencies to prepare an APR on program performance for the previous fiscal year, including a discussion of why any performance goals were not met and plans to meet the goal.²²

For each of its 11 missions identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, the Coast Guard has developed goals and targets to assess and communicate agency performance. Performance goals, which are comprised of measures, targets, and time frames, are developed by the Coast Guard's program offices responsible for the mission or activity to which the goal applies. As shown in figure 1, the Coast Guard's performance assessment process also includes identifying performance gaps and implementing corrective actions to address unmet performance goals.

Figure 1: Elements of the Coast Guard's Performance Assessment Process



Source: GAO. | GAO-18-13

²¹31 U.S.C. § 1115.

²²31 U.S.C. § 1116.

Definition of Common Terms

Performance goal - a target level of performance expressed as a tangible, measurable objective, against which actual achievement can be compared, including a goal expressed as a quantitative standard, value, or rate. A performance goal is comprised of a measure, a target, and a time frame.

Performance measure - a tabulation, calculation, recording of activity or effort, or assessment of results compared to intended purpose, that can be expressed quantitatively or in another way that indicates a level or degree of performance.

Performance target - quantifiable or otherwise measurable characteristic typically expressed as a number that tells how well or at what level an agency or one of its components aspires to perform.

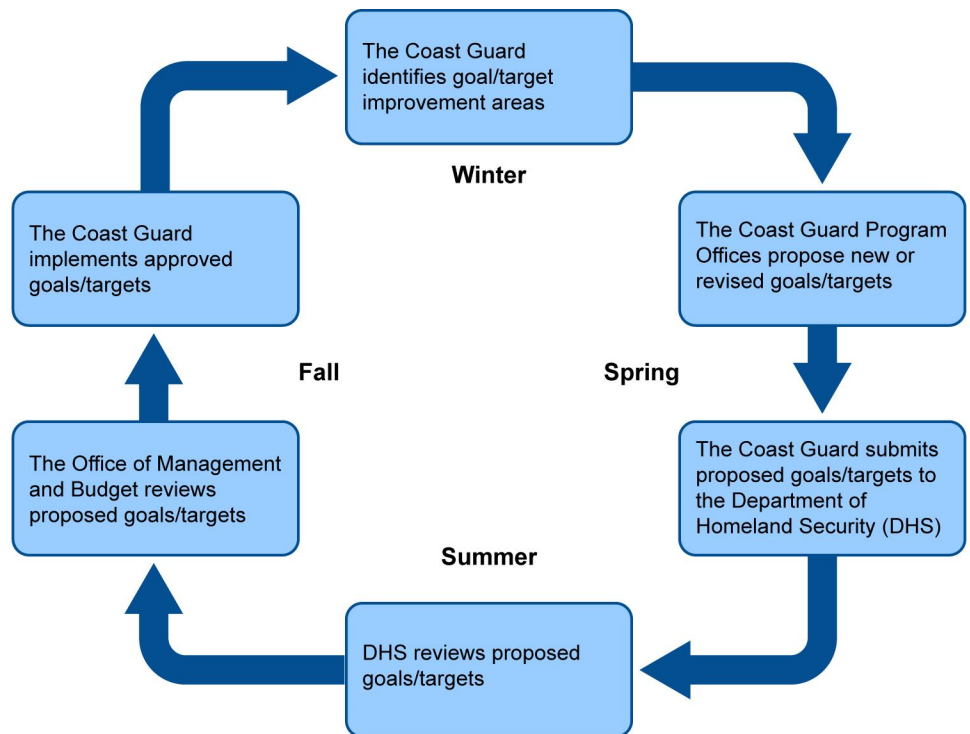
Source: Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) and Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-11 (2016) | GAO-18-13

To measure mission performance, the Coast Guard uses three types of performance goals and measures established by DHS for performance reporting by the Coast Guard and other DHS components:

- **Strategic:** Goals used to reflect achievement of missions that are publicly reported in the DHS APR. As part of DHS's APR, these goals are subject to GPRA and GPRAMA requirements.
- **Management:** Goals used to gauge program results and tie to resource requests that are reported to Congress and publicly available through the DHS Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ), along with the strategic goals.
- **Operational:** Additional DHS component measures not reported by DHS, but used internally by components to inform management of operations and activities.

The Coast Guard's APR states that in March of each year, the Coast Guard is to complete a yearlong process of performance assessment, improvement planning, and target setting to coincide with its annual budget submission to DHS. According to Coast Guard officials, Coast Guard planning guidance, and the Coast Guard's APR, the Coast Guard is to develop and revise its performance goals and measures as part of an annual review in coordination with strategic and operational planning and the DHS budget submission. Also considered in this review are annual planning assessments, mission analysis, program evaluations, risk assessments, and other studies. See figure 2 for the Coast Guard's process for developing and revising its performance goals and targets.

Figure 2: The Coast Guard Process for Developing and Revising Performance Goals and Targets



Source: GAO analysis of DHS and Coast Guard information. | GAO-18-13

As part of its review process, the Coast Guard is to establish targets for the current and subsequent 2 fiscal years, according to Coast Guard officials. Each target is set by the Coast Guard, but according to the Coast Guard's APR, some are derived from external mandates. For example, DHS mandates a 100 percent target for the percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment. Except for targets that reflect performance standards established with specific stakeholders, the Coast Guard annually refines its targets by, among other things, ascertaining the impact of constraints on the Coast Guard's capabilities due to staffing, training, equipment, infrastructure, information, or operating budget limitations.

Reporting the Coast Guard's Mission Performance

According to Coast Guard officials, each year Coast Guard program managers are to report mission performance from the previous fiscal year through its internal APR. The APRs summarize performance relative to targets for that year. Coast Guard and DHS officials also told us that the

Coast Guard is to report on results for strategic and management performance goals to DHS. These officials also stated that DHS uses these performance goals to communicate the Coast Guard's performance and provide information for the budgeting process to Congress, other policymakers, and the public.

As shown in table 2, the Coast Guard reported on 38 performance goals and measures in its fiscal year 2015 APR, which included performance goals for each of its 11 statutory missions. The performance goals are intended to offer a high-level summary of the Coast Guard's performance results.

Table 2: Number and Type of the Coast Guard's Performance Goals and Measures by Mission Reported in the Coast Guard's 2015 Annual Performance Report

Coast Guard mission	Strategic	Management	Operational	Total
Ports, waterways, and coastal security	1	5	0	6
Migrant interdiction	1	1	2	4
Drug interdiction	0	1	1	2
Living marine resources	1	0	1	2
Other law enforcement	1	0	1	2
Marine safety	1	3	3	7
Marine environmental protection	0	2	2	4
Search and rescue	1	1	0	2
Defense readiness	0	0	4	4
Aids to navigation	1	1	1	3
Ice operations	0	1	0	1
Not applicable ^a	0	0	1	1
	7	15	16	38

Source: The Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13

^aThe performance goal average age in years of rulemaking projects in the Coast Guard's portfolio was not related to a specific mission, although the majority of regulations the Coast Guard is responsible for are related to the marine safety mission.

The Coast Guard's Performance Goals Generally Align with Each of its Missions, but Do Not Fully Address Core Mission Activities and Lack Transparency

37 of 38 Performance Goals in the Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2015 APR Align with its 11 Missions, but Do Not Cover All Core Mission Activities

The Coast Guard's performance goals are generally aligned with its statutory missions.²³ Specifically, 37 of 38 performance goals in the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 APR align with the agency's 11 missions identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended.²⁴ For example, the Coast Guard has four performance goals that align with its migrant interdiction mission and seven performance goals that align with its marine safety mission. One of the 38 performance goals in the fiscal year 2015 APR was not related to the 11 statutory missions. However, this goal was subsequently deemed as an internal measure not focused on mission outcomes, and was therefore not included in the fiscal year 2016 APR. For a more detailed listing of the Coast Guard's annual performance goals and our analysis of the extent to which they align with each of its missions, see appendix I.

While the Coast Guard's performance goals are generally aligned with its statutory missions, we found that goals representing 5 of its 11 missions do not fully address all of the respective mission activities, without an explanation of the Coast Guard's rationale for why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others are not. For example, the Coast Guard's ports, waterways, and coastal security mission is to detect, prevent, disrupt, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, sabotage, espionage, or subversive acts in the maritime domain and upon the U.S. Marine Transportation System. The Coast Guard has six

²³We analyzed the 38 performance goals listed in the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 APR. See Appendix I for a crosswalk of the 38 performance goals to statutory missions.

²⁴The Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR had 39 performance goals, which included two new goals—*annual number of breaches at high risk maritime facilities* and *percentage of property in danger of loss: saved*.

performance goals related to this mission, but none of these goals capture the performance of the Coast Guard's response and recovery capabilities. Instead, these are captured by internal operational measures within the program carrying out the mission and not reported publicly.

Similarly, the Coast Guard has two performance goals related to its drug interdiction mission. While the two goals capture performance data related to cocaine interdiction, they do not capture performance data for any other illegal drugs. According to Coast Guard officials, it does not have specific performance goals related to drugs other than cocaine because the majority of maritime drug movements involve cocaine. However, the Coast Guard does not explain in its APR why it does not report performance for other illegal drugs. A 2015 RAND Corporation study on the Coast Guard performance measures recommended that the Coast Guard expand the scope of illicit activity being measured beyond cocaine.²⁵ More recently, in November 2016, the DHS Inspector General reported that DHS components lacked measures that accurately assess progress towards achieving desired outcomes of the National Drug Control Strategy.²⁶

Further, the Coast Guard has four performance goals for its marine environmental protection mission, such as the annual number of chemical discharge incidents and the average number of oil spills in the maritime environment. However, the suite of goals related to this mission does not include activities related to responding to such incidents, which includes providing response capabilities, technical advice, documentation and support assistance, communications, and incident management support for response activities. The Coast Guard did not report in its APR why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others were not.

²⁵RAND Corporation, *Enhancing U.S. Coast Guard Metrics*, RR-1173-USCG (Santa Monica, Calif.: 2015).

²⁶Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, *DHS Drug Interdiction Efforts Need Improvement*, OIG-17-09 (Washington, D.C.: November 2016). According to 21 U.S.C. § 1704, DHS must annually submit to the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the appropriate congressional committees: (1) the number and type of seizures of drugs by each component of DHS seizing drugs, as well as statistical information on the geographic areas of such seizures; and (2) the number of air and maritime patrol hours primarily dedicated to drug supply reduction missions undertaken by each component of DHS.

Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government state that management should determine whether performance measures for the defined objectives are appropriate for evaluating the entity's performance in achieving those objectives.²⁷ These standards also state that management should internally and externally communicate the necessary quality information to achieve the entity's objectives. According to Coast Guard officials, in certain cases, describing which performance data the Coast Guard considered and decided to measure goes beyond the scope of the intended purpose of the APR, which is to report on annual results of existing performance goals. Specifically, the Coast Guard officials explained that the purpose of the APR is to present what the Coast Guard views as its key performance indicators, rather than describe which performance data it decided to measure. However, in the absence of documentation explaining how existing performance goals address each mission, the extent to which the Coast Guard's performance goals encompass all of their mission activities is unclear. Either developing new goals to address mission activity gaps, or describing in its APR how existing goals sufficiently assess the performance of each mission could provide more meaningful information on progress in achieving its missions to executive branch decision makers, Congress, and the public.

Coast Guard Lacks Full Transparency in Reporting Performance Results

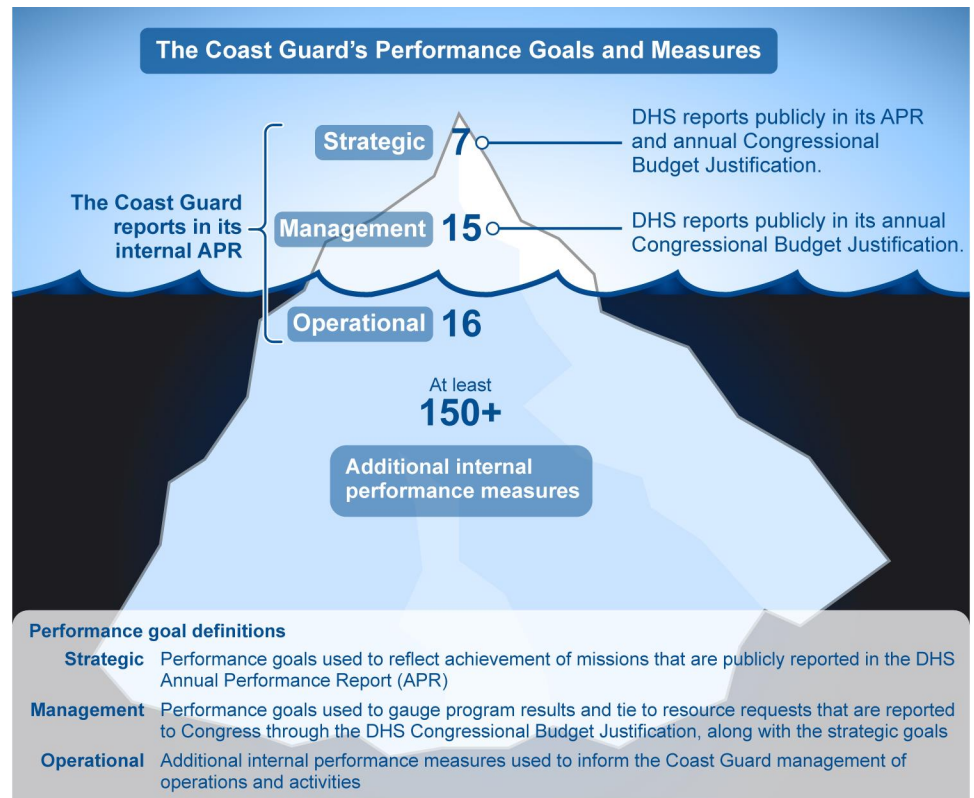
According to Coast Guard and DHS officials, due to a previous DHS leadership decision, the Coast Guard only publicly reports performance goal data regarding its strategic and management goals, which are published by DHS. As a result, the Coast Guard's APR has not been released publicly since 2011 and Congress has not had visibility over performance across all of the Coast Guard's missions.²⁸ For example, one of the Coast Guard's missions—defense readiness—has no goals that are publicly reported or shared with Congress even though measures related to defense readiness are included in the Coast Guard's APR. Further, the Coast Guard's performance information is not currently

²⁷GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#), (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 2014).

²⁸The Coast Guard has at least 150 additional internal performance measures used to inform management of operations and activities based on our analysis of the Coast Guard's Strategic Performance Directive and Operational Performance Assessment Report.

reported in a single publication. For example, as shown in figure 3 below, DHS publicly reports on the Coast Guard's seven strategic performance goals in its APR and CBJ, and also reports on the Coast Guard's 15 management performance goals. However, only the Coast Guard's APR contains information regarding operational performance goals.²⁹

Figure 3: DHS and the Coast Guard's Reporting of the Coast Guard's Performance Goals and Measures



Source: GAO analysis of the Coast Guard's 2015 APR and additional information provided by the Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13

GPRAMA, which may serve as leading practices for component agencies such as Coast Guard, also includes requirements for agencies to communicate performance data, such as directing agencies to make available their performance plans and performance reports on their public

²⁹DHS's APR does not include performance goals related to the Coast Guard's drug interdiction, marine environmental protection, defense readiness, or ice operations missions. Management performance goals related to three of these four missions are reported in the department's CBJ and the Coast Guard's APR.

websites at least annually.³⁰ OMB guidance also provides that it is important that agencies communicate relevant, reliable, and timely performance information within and outside their organizations to improve performance outcomes and operational efficiency.³¹ In addition, we previously reported that improving the communication and accessibility of performance data can facilitate the use of performance data by agency managers and inform congressional decision making and oversight of agency programs.³² We also previously reported that sharing performance data on agencies' web sites allow users to quickly access information from an overall organizational perspective and to drill down to get a more detailed perspective at the sub-unit level.³³

Coast Guard officials stated that they can see the benefit of publicly releasing their APR; however, DHS's decision to limit the number of performance goals shared publicly has so far deterred the Coast Guard from pursuing its APR's public release. DHS officials told us that the department is concerned about conflicting information that a component's APR might present because they are vetted and produced separately from the DHS APR. For example, although the Coast Guard has proposed annual performance goals for its defense readiness mission to share with the public or Congress, DHS and Coast Guard officials stated that the department has not approved publicly sharing goals related to this mission because it does not align with the department's strategic goals. According to DHS officials, increased transparency of the Coast Guard's performance information can be accomplished through congressional inquiry. However, the lack of transparency regarding performance data shared publicly and with Congress can result in an incomplete picture of mission performance and can limit effective oversight of the Coast Guard's operations. As a result, the public and Congress may be unable to determine the extent to which the Coast Guard's performance is meeting the Coast Guard's missions. Posting the Coast Guard's APR on its public web site would increase the

³⁰31 U.S.C. §§ 1115, 1116.

³¹OMB Circular No. A-11, § 210.5 (2016).

³²GAO, *Managing for Results: Leading Practices Should Guide the Continued Development of Performance.gov*, [GAO-13-517](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 6, 2013); and *Managing for Results: A Guide for Using the GPRA Modernization Act to Help Inform Congressional Decision Making*, [GAO-12-621SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 15, 2012), [GAO-13-517](#) and [GAO-05-927](#).

³³[GAO-13-517](#).

transparency of its planned performance and actual results, and make such information more available and accessible.

The Coast Guard and DHS Have Processes for Ensuring Data Reliability for Selected Goals Reviewed, but Lack Complete Documentation and Transparency of Known Limitations

The Coast Guard and DHS Have Processes for Ensuring Data Reliability for Selected Performance Goals

The Coast Guard has processes for ensuring the reliability of its performance data for the seven selected performance goals we reviewed.³⁴ The goals we reviewed include, among others, percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment and removal rate for cocaine from non-commercial vessels in the maritime transit zone. See appendix II for a description of each of the selected goals we reviewed. The specific process used to ensure data reliability varies for each performance goal, but there are common approaches, such as:

Issuing guidance: The Coast Guard issues guidance to provide definitions, policy, and processes for reporting on operational activities, such as tracking search and rescue cases in the Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement (MISLE) system.³⁵ Further, the Coast Guard's Maritime Law Enforcement Manual provides guidance to help

³⁴We analyzed 7 of the 38 performance goals in the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 APR, which we selected to include a variety of performance results, data sources, and Coast Guard missions.

³⁵Coast Guard personnel use MISLE as a case management tool to record operational activities such as vessel boardings, marine safety, environmental protection, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations. Coast Guard's MISLE Search and Rescue User Guide provides guidance to officials whose responsibilities involve entering, managing, and viewing information related to search and missions.

operational commanders determine whether they have detected an illegal incursion of foreign fishing vessels in the U.S. exclusive economic zone.³⁶

Implementing built-in checks: Relevant information systems contain built-in checks to detect and prevent potential data entry errors, such as drop-down menus and mandatory data fields. For example, MISLE contains drop-down menus that distinguish between various types of search and rescue cases, including aircraft crashes, collisions, and disabled vessels. In addition, Coast Guard officials reported that an upgrade to MISLE, in 2015, added approximately 500 additional controls, such as those described above.

Conducting manual reviews: Coast Guard headquarters and field officials reported manually reviewing performance data to help ensure reliability. For example, officials in headquarters reported holding quarterly inter-agency meetings to review the reliability of performance data related to the cocaine interdiction performance goal. In addition, Coast Guard officials in headquarters reported that they generate data on waterway closures during ice season, based on daily phone calls with field units responsible for conducting icebreaking. Headquarters officials also review and reconcile the data with field units if discrepancies are found.

Following DHS processes: As a component of DHS, the Coast Guard is required to follow DHS processes for ensuring data reliability for strategic and management performance goals. For example, the Coast Guard submits proposals to DHS and OMB for new or revised strategic and management performance goals, as needed, through a required standard DHS form—Performance Measure Definition Form (PMDF)—that includes information on data reliability, among other things.³⁷

³⁶Within the U.S. exclusive economic zone, the United States has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing natural resources, among other things. The U.S. exclusive economic zone is adjacent to the 12 nautical mile territorial sea of the United States and extends no more than 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline.

³⁷According to DHS's fiscal year 2015 APR, the PMDF is used as a change management tool to propose and review new performance goals, make changes to existing goals, or retire performance goals. The information contained in PMDFs is maintained in a DHS database, and is published annually as Appendix A to DHS's APR.

In addition, DHS requires components to self-evaluate key controls and to attest to the completeness and reliability of performance data. According to DHS's fiscal year 2015 APR, components' assurance statements, including those from the Coast Guard, serve as the primary basis for the Secretary's assertion whether DHS has effective controls over performance reporting.³⁸ Furthermore, DHS reported selecting a limited number of components' strategic and management performance goals each year for a detailed review of data reliability conducted by an independent third party. Since fiscal year 2011, DHS selected four of the Coast Guard's performance goals for these DHS reviews, all of which were determined to have adequate or good data quality.³⁹

The Coast Guard Has Taken Steps to Address Known Data Reliability Limitations of Two Selected Performance Goals but Could Improve Documentation and Transparency

The Coast Guard reported taking steps to address data limitations with two of the seven selected performance goals we reviewed. However, the full extent of such limitations is not completely described in Coast Guard and DHS documentation—specifically PMDFs and Coast Guard and DHS APRs—intended to provide assurance of data reliability to internal and external audiences. For example, the Coast Guard and DHS identified limitations with the Coast Guard's performance goal regarding the number of detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels violating U.S. waters, which is publicly reported in DHS's APR. The DHS review of this performance goal, reported in August 2015, raised questions about the validity of the goal—that is, whether it provides a useful measure of the Coast Guard's performance. Specifically, the review noted that this performance goal is intended to measure a deterrence effect, but doing so is inherently difficult and may lead to contradictory interpretations of

³⁸GPRA requires agencies to describe how they are ensuring the reliability of performance data. See 31 U.S.C. §§ 1115(b)(8), 1116(c)(6).

³⁹These selected performance goals include (1) percent risk reduction in the maritime domain (February 2012), (2) security compliance rate for high-risk maritime facilities (April 2013), (3) number of detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels violating U.S. waters (August 2015), and (4) migrant interdiction effectiveness in the maritime environment (May 2017). Although DHS determined the data on detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels to be sufficiently reliable, DHS identified limitations with the validity of the performance goal, as discussed later in this report.

performance.⁴⁰ We determined that the data for this performance goal was sufficiently reliable for our purposes—that is, sufficiently accurate and complete—but questions remain about its validity. Reliable data is not a useful indication of performance unless it is also a valid representation of the goal being addressed. DHS officials reported that they did not include a discussion of the limitations for this performance goal in DHS's fiscal year 2015 APR because the performance goal met the minimum threshold for data reliability despite its limitations. Coast Guard officials reported, however, they are aware of these limitations and are working with DHS and OMB to improve the performance goal and implement corrective actions within 1 to 2 years. In the meantime, however, the Coast Guard did not report these known limitations in its March 2016 PMDF, its fiscal year 2016 APR, or DHS's fiscal year 2016 APR. Coast Guard officials told us that, as a result of our audit work, they added an appendix to the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR that generally describes the reliability and limitations of the performance goals reported in the APR. However, officials did not include a discussion of the limitations for this specific performance goal in any part of the fiscal year 2016 APR.

Coast Guard officials also reported that they are considering steps to address known limitations with their annual performance goal regarding the five year average number of recreational boating deaths and injuries. In particular, officials believe that a large share of recreational boating injuries that do not require hospitalization are not reported to the Coast Guard,⁴¹ and the amount of underreporting may vary over time due to changes in industry trends, making it difficult to accurately determine

⁴⁰For example, the DHS review of this performance goal reported that the Coast Guard appeared to interpret an increase in detected incursions as an indication of decreased effectiveness in deterrence and responded by reallocating additional resources towards this mission. Additionally, the explanation of results reported in DHS APRs attributed the increase in detected incursions to an increase in detection capabilities.

⁴¹Officials reported that their assessment of this issue is based on a survey conducted approximately 10 years ago, as well as studies from 2006 and 2011.

actual injury rates and program performance.⁴² We determined that the data for this performance goal was not sufficiently reliable for our purposes due to these likely limitations with the completeness of the data.⁴³ Coast Guard Officials reported they are considering revisions to this performance goal that could improve its reliability,⁴⁴ as well as plans to sponsor a study in 2018 intended to improve their understanding of recreational boating trends. However, the Coast Guard did not report the limitations with this performance goal in its March 2016 PMDF. In addition, although the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR acknowledges that some recreational boating incidents are not reported, the APR does not describe the possible extent of the limitation. Coast Guard Officials noted that they did not want to speculate in the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR on the extent of the limitations, as estimates of the extent of underreporting may not be precise or reflect the most current trends.

Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government states that management should evaluate data for reliability and communicate quality information to achieve the agency's objectives.⁴⁵ In addition, GPRAMA requires agencies to identify limitations to performance data and how the agency will compensate for such limitations, which may serve as a leading practice for the Coast Guard, as a component of DHS.⁴⁶ Assessing the extent to which performance data limitations are documented and reported in PMDFs and DHS and Coast Guard APRs could provide the Coast Guard with greater assurance that its reporting of

⁴²For example, officials cited the increased use of stand-up paddleboards as an example of changing industry trends. In 2008, the Coast Guard determined that a paddleboard used beyond the limits of a swimming, surfing, or bathing area is considered a vessel under 46 U.S.C. § 2101 and is subject to the Coast Guard regulations, unless specifically exempted. According to the Coast Guard, while the number of registered boats in the United States declined by 700,000 from 2006 to 2016, the number of Americans participating in nontraditional boating activities, such as paddle sports, increased by more than 3 million people from 2011 to 2016. See U.S. Coast Guard, *The Coast Guard Journal of Safety & Security at Sea, Proceedings of the Marine Safety & Security Council*, vol. 73, no. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Fall—Winter 2016).

⁴³As a result of these limitations, the *five year average number of recreational boating deaths and injuries* performance goal is not discussed in the subsequent section of this report.

⁴⁴Specifically, officials have discussed adjusting injury data to account for an estimate of underreporting, and increasing the threshold for reportable injuries from injuries that require medical treatment beyond first aid to injuries that require hospital admission.

⁴⁵[GAO-14-704G](#).

⁴⁶31 U.S.C. §§ 1115(b)(8), 1116(c)(6).

limitations is comprehensive. In addition, updating these documents, as needed, based on the results of the assessments would provide greater transparency regarding the reliability and validity of the Coast Guard's performance data and assist decision makers in determining the extent to which performance data fully reflects the Coast Guard's ability to meet its missions.

The Coast Guard Reported Various Explanations and Corrective Actions for Selected Goals Reviewed, but Lacks Measurable Actions and Documentation to Monitor Implementation

Explanations and Corrective Actions for Selected Coast Guard Performance Goals Varied

Annually, the Coast Guard documents an explanation for why it did or did not meet each performance goal reported to DHS, as well as corrective actions for each unmet goal. As a leading practice, Coast Guard officials reported that they also document corrective actions for operational performance goals reported in the Coast Guard's APR. The Coast Guard reports its explanations and corrective actions for unmet goals in various ways. We found that, internally, the Coast Guard documents brief explanations and corrective actions for all performance goals included in the Coast Guard's APR into the DHS Future Years Homeland Security Program System (FYHSP), a department-wide database used to collect performance information.⁴⁷ In addition, the Coast Guard reports explanations and broad corrective actions for each of its missions in the Coast Guard's APR and Strategic Planning Direction.⁴⁸ Officials also reported discussing performance results and corrective actions during

⁴⁷According to DHS's fiscal year 2015 APR, FYHSP is a database that allows for the management of DHS's performance plan and for components to enter their performance results. According to DHS officials, components are generally required to enter performance results in FYHSP on a quarterly basis, and explanations and corrective actions on an annual basis.

⁴⁸According to the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2015 Strategic Planning Direction, the Strategic Planning Direction is the primary mechanism for apportioning resources and providing strategic direction to operational commanders.

internal meetings with program managers and senior leadership. We found that, externally, the Coast Guard's explanations and corrective actions for strategic performance goals are reported in DHS's APR, as well as portions of the explanations for strategic and management performance goals in the DHS CBJ.

Explanations for Unmet Performance Goals

For the six performance goals we reviewed with reliable data,⁴⁹ the Coast Guard reported not meeting its performance target for the percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment every year from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. For the remaining five selected performance goals, the Coast Guard reported meeting its target at least once but not every year from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. The explanations for unmet performance goals for the selected goals we reviewed reported most frequently in FYHSP, and by Coast Guard officials we spoke with, included the following:⁵⁰

Factors outside of the Coast Guard's control: For example, officials in headquarters responsible for managing the Coast Guard's icebreaking mission reported that severe weather is generally the cause when the Coast Guard does not meet its performance goals for icebreaking in the Great Lakes and eastern seaboard. In addition, officials reported that factors outside of the Coast Guard's control affect its ability to save all lives on search and rescue missions, such as severe weather, limited information on the location of vessels, and deaths occurring prior to the Coast Guard's notification or arrival.

Limited resources: Officials from the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area Command reported that the Coast Guard's surface fleet and aviation recapitalization program has provided the Coast Guard with greater

⁴⁹As previously discussed, we determined that the data for recreational boating deaths and injuries was not reliable for our purposes due to limitations with the completeness of the data. As a result, this performance goal is not discussed in this section.

⁵⁰See appendix II for additional information on explanations and corrective actions for the selected performance goals.

capabilities but fewer assets for conducting operations.⁵¹ For example, officials reported providing assistance to the Pacific Area Command to fill some operational gaps due to limited assets for conducting missions in the Pacific Area.⁵² Headquarters officials also reported that sequestration and budget cuts have negatively impacted the Coast Guard's performance for migrant interdiction in fiscal years 2013 and 2014, as resources that may have otherwise been allocated for this mission were reallocated to higher priority missions such as drug interdiction.

Inherent limitations with some performance goals: According to DHS and Coast Guard officials, in fiscal year 2011 DHS leadership required that the Coast Guard set the performance target for its publicly reported search and rescue performance goal—percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment—at 100 percent. DHS and Coast Guard officials in headquarters reported that the 100 percent target reflects their efforts to save all lives. In addition, Coast Guard officials reported that reducing the target may communicate an inaccurate message that the Coast Guard does not strive to save all lives. However, as previously discussed, officials reported that factors outside of the Coast Guard's control affect its ability to meet this goal, including deaths occurring prior to the Coast Guard's notification or arrival. As a result, the Coast Guard reported not meeting the 100 percent target every year from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. Coast Guard officials reported that they use a lower and more realistic internal target for management purposes.⁵³

⁵¹Our prior work on the Coast Guard's acquisition efforts identified challenges in the areas of costs, management, and oversight that have led to delivery delays and other operational challenges for certain assets, but it also recognized several steps the Coast Guard had taken to improve acquisition management. See GAO, *Coast Guard: Opportunities Exist to Further Improve Acquisition Management Capabilities*, [GAO-11-480](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 13, 2011) and GAO, *Homeland Security Acquisitions: Earlier Requirements Definition and Clear Documentation of Key Decisions Could Facilitate Ongoing Progress*, [GAO-17-346SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 6, 2017).

⁵²Specifically, assets permanently assigned to Atlantic Area that may be placed under the operational control of Pacific Area, or otherwise support a Pacific Area mission while under operational control of Atlantic Area.

⁵³Coast Guard officials reported meeting their internal performance target for the *percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment* each year from fiscal years 2011 through 2015.

Corrective Actions for Unmet Performance Goals

The corrective actions reported most frequently in FYHSP for the selected unmet goals we reviewed, and by the Coast Guard officials we spoke with, included the following:⁵⁴

Prioritize and allocate resources effectively: Officials we spoke with reported improving their resource allocation planning for migrant interdiction, which helped the Coast Guard to better anticipate undocumented migrant flow and deploy resources effectively. In addition, for reducing maritime security risk, officials reported plans to continue focusing patrols on addressing the greatest threats, while also restructuring the Coast Guard forces to improve performance.

Increase operations or capabilities: Officials reported increasing the Coast Guard's use of electronic detection technology to improve detection of illegal incursions of foreign fishing vessels in U.S. waters. In another example, officials reported that they would increase their capabilities for conducting drug interdictions based on their completion of a proof of concept deployment with the U.S. Navy and the deployment of additional U.S. Navy forces to this mission, as well as plans to increase the number of personnel trained to conduct certain vessel boarding operations.

Strengthen partnerships: In addition to the Coast Guard reported efforts to grow its partnership with the U.S. Navy to improve the interdiction of drug traffickers, the Coast Guard reported plans to continue strengthening its partnerships with the Canadian Coast Guard to provide additional icebreaking support during severe winters.

Conduct data analysis: As part of the Coast Guard's continuous improvement processes, Coast Guard officials we spoke with reported conducting analyses to identify any systemic challenges and underlying causes for its search and rescue mission. In addition, Coast Guard headquarters officials reported that their analysis of past performance results, in collaboration with field officials, led to an increase in resource

⁵⁴See Appendix II for additional information on explanations and corrective actions for the selected performance goals from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. Coast Guard officials reported that they inadvertently did not enter corrective actions from fiscal years 2014 through 2016 for the *percent of undocumented migrants attempting to enter the United States by maritime routes interdicted by Coast Guard*. We obtained information on corrective actions for this performance goal through interviews with headquarters and field officials.

hours allocated to the Coast Guard's drug interdiction and migrant interdiction missions.

The Coast Guard Does Not Have Measurable Corrective Actions or Time Frames

While the Coast Guard reported efforts to address unmet performance goals for the selected goals we reviewed, its corrective actions are not measurable and do not include time frames for implementation. For example, the corrective action the Coast Guard reported to DHS for fiscal year 2014 for cocaine interdiction stated that the Coast Guard was evaluating its counter-drug posture to determine additional resources needed, but the Coast Guard did not report measureable actions or time frames for implementation. Additionally, the corrective action reported in DHS's fiscal year 2013 APR for the number of detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels stated that the Coast Guard would continue identification and interdiction to stem the increase and drive down incursion activity.

DHS officials reported that they do not require the Coast Guard to develop measurable corrective actions for unmet goals. In addition, the DHS FYHSP database restricts components from submitting corrective actions that are more than 1,000 characters, which results in brief entries. DHS officials reported that they defer to components whether to document more detailed corrective actions in FYHSP or in other documents.

As previously discussed, GPRA requirements may serve as leading performance management practices for components, such as the Coast Guard. GPRA, as amended by GPRAMA, requires agencies, such as DHS, to provide plans and schedules with measurable milestones for achieving each unmet performance goal reported at the agency level.⁵⁵ Further developing and documenting corrective actions, in its APR or elsewhere, for performance goals reported in the Coast Guard's APR that are measurable and include time frames for implementation may provide DHS and the Coast Guard's management with greater assurance that the Coast Guard is taking effective steps in a timely fashion to address known performance gaps.

⁵⁵31 U.S.C. §§ 1116(c)(3), 1116(g).

The Coast Guard Does Not Document Its Efforts to Monitor or Evaluate the Implementation of Corrective Actions

The Coast Guard does not document in its APR, or elsewhere, its efforts to monitor whether the corrective actions it has developed for unmet performance goals were implemented or evaluate whether the corrective actions have helped to mitigate performance gaps as intended. Coast Guard officials told us that they discuss corrective actions during internal meetings with program managers and senior leadership, but they do not document these discussions or any decisions made on corrective actions. Without documentation, we were unable to verify whether corrective actions were implemented and evaluated as intended. Coast Guard officials stated that they could improve documentation on corrective actions, and they are considering related policy revisions as a result of our work. DHS officials reported that although they require components to enter corrective actions in FYHSP, DHS generally does not provide oversight of components' corrective actions.

According to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, management should evaluate issues identified through monitoring activities, determine and document appropriate corrective actions for deficiencies, and remediate the deficiency in a timely manner.⁵⁶ In addition, GPRAMA requires agencies to designate a senior official to oversee the implementation of the corrective actions designed to meet each unmet goal.⁵⁷ By documenting, in its APR, or elsewhere, its efforts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of planned corrective actions for performance goals reported in the Coast Guard's APR, the Coast Guard and stakeholders could more fully understand the extent to which corrective actions have been implemented, determine if these actions have helped to mitigate performance gaps as intended, and to continue to plan and prioritize its operations to target performance gaps.

⁵⁶ [GAO-14-704G](#).

⁵⁷ 31 U.S.C. § 1116(g). Although these requirements apply to the DHS level, here we intend for these requirements to be applied as leading practices at the Coast Guard.

Conclusions

The Coast Guard plays a critical role in ensuring the safety and security of U.S. ports and waterways. The ability to develop and monitor annual performance goals that are clearly aligned with its multifaceted missions and cover key mission activities is vital for assessing and communicating the Coast Guard's performance to Congress, other policymakers, and taxpayers. Although the Coast Guard's performance goals are generally aligned with its 11 statutory missions, the Coast Guard does not explain why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others are not. In the absence of an explanation of why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others are not, the extent to which the Coast Guard's performance goals encompass its mission activities is unclear. Either developing new goals to address mission activity gaps, or describing in its APR how existing goals sufficiently assess the performance of each mission could provide meaningful information to executive branch decision makers, Congress, and the public. In addition, as a result of a DHS leadership decision, the Coast Guard has not made its APR publicly available since 2011 and DHS only publishes a subset of the Coast Guard's performance goals in publicly available documents. Posting the Coast Guard's APR on its public website would increase the transparency of its planned performance and actual results, and make such information more readily available and accessible.

Reliable data are critical to accurately gauge the Coast Guard's progress in meeting its missions. Although the Coast Guard has processes in place to ensure reliable performance data, continued improvements in documenting and disclosing data limitations would help the Coast Guard and its stakeholders to fully leverage these data, and could lead to more effective management decision making. Assessing the extent to which performance data limitations are documented and reported in PMDFs and DHS and Coast Guard APRs could provide the Coast Guard with greater assurance that its reporting of limitations is comprehensive and transparent. In addition, updating these documents, as needed, based on the results of the assessments would provide greater transparency regarding the reliability and validity of the Coast Guard's performance data and assist decision makers in determining the extent to which performance data fully reflect the Coast Guard's ability to meet its missions.

The Coast Guard reported various explanations and corrective actions for the unmet performance goals we reviewed; however, its corrective actions are not measurable and do not include time frames for implementation. Developing and documenting corrective actions for performance goals reported in the Coast Guard's APR, or elsewhere, that are measurable and include time frames for implementation may provide DHS and the Coast Guard management with greater assurance that the Coast Guard is taking steps to effectively address known performance gaps in a timely manner. Moreover, the Coast Guard did not document monitoring efforts or its evaluation of the implementation of corrective actions. By documenting, in its APR or elsewhere, its efforts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of planned corrective actions for performance goals reported in the Coast Guard's APR, the Coast Guard and stakeholders could more fully understand the extent to which corrective actions have been implemented, determine if these actions have helped to mitigate performance gaps as intended, and to continue to plan and prioritize its operations to target performance gaps.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following five recommendations to the Coast Guard:

- The Commandant of the Coast Guard should either develop new performance goals to address mission activity gaps, or explain in the Coast Guard's APR why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others are not. (Recommendation 1)
- The Commandant of the Coast Guard, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, should make the Coast Guard's future Annual Performance Reports publicly available on the Coast Guard's website. (Recommendation 2)
- The Commandant of the Coast Guard, should coordinate with the Secretary of Homeland Security, and assess the extent to which documentation on performance data reliability, including PMDFs and DHS and Coast Guard APRs, contain appropriate information on known data reliability limitations, and update these documents, as needed, based on the results of the assessment. (Recommendation 3)
- The Commandant of the Coast Guard should develop and document, in its APR or elsewhere, corrective actions for unmet performance goals that are measurable and include time frames for implementation. (Recommendation 4)

- The Commandant of the Coast Guard should document, in its APR or elsewhere, its efforts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of corrective actions for unmet performance goals. (Recommendation 5)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DHS for review and comment. In its comments, DHS concurred with all five recommendations and described planned actions to address them, as summarized below and reprinted in appendix III. DHS also provided technical comments that we incorporated, as appropriate.

In response to our first recommendation to develop new performance goals to address mission activity gaps, or explain in the Coast Guard's APR why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others are not, DHS concurred stating that the Coast Guard will add new measures in future Coast Guard APR's and explain what is measured and what is not, as appropriate. These actions, if implemented as described, should address the intent of our recommendation.

DHS also concurred with and documented plans to address our second recommendation that the Coast Guard, in coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, should make the Coast Guard's future APRs publicly available on the Coast Guard's website, and stated that the Coast Guard will take actions to do so by May 2018.

Regarding our third recommendation, that the Commandant of the Coast Guard coordinate with the Secretary of Homeland Security and assess the extent to which documentation on performance data reliability, including PMDFs and DHS and Coast Guard APRs, contain appropriate information on known data reliability limitations, and update these documents, as needed, based on the results of the assessment, DHS stated that the Coast Guard will add a discussion of limitations for each performance goal as an appendix to future APRs. As described in our report, Coast Guard officials added an appendix to the Coast Guard's fiscal year 2016 APR that generally describes the reliability and limitations of the performance goals reported in the APR. To fully implement this recommendation, the Coast Guard would also need to assess the extent to which PMDFs and DHS and Coast Guard APRs contain appropriate information on known data limitations, and update these documents as needed, based on the results of the assessment.

DHS also concurred and documented plans to address our fourth recommendation that the Commandant of the Coast Guard develop and document, in its APR or elsewhere, corrective actions for unmet performance goals that are measurable and include time frames for implementation.

DHS concurred with our fifth recommendation that Coast Guard document, in its APR or elsewhere, its efforts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of corrective actions for unmet performance goals. In its response, DHS noted that the Coast Guard's future performance plans will include a discussion of correction action plan status changes from the previously published plan, as appropriate. To fully address this recommendation the Coast Guard would need to demonstrate that it has evaluated the implementation of the corrective actions to ensure they had the intended result for addressing unmet performance goals.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions, please contact me at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@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 significant contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Grover". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Grover
Director
Homeland Security and Justice

Appendix I: Information on the Coast Guard's Mission Programs, 11 Missions and Fiscal Year 2015 Annual Performance Goals

	Mission ^a	Performance Goal	Goal Type ^b	GAO Analysis
Maritime security operations	Ports, waterways, and coastal security (response activities)	Percent reduction of all maritime security risk subject to Coast Guard influence	Management	The performance goals do not capture response and recovery capabilities.
		Percent reduction of maritime security risk—Coast Guard consequence management	Management	
		Percent reduction of maritime security risk —Coast Guard terrorist entry prevention	Management	
		Percent reduction of maritime security risk—Coast Guard weapons of mass destruction entry prevention	Management	
Maritime law enforcement	Migrant interdiction	Number of undocumented migrants attempting to enter U.S. by maritime routes	Operational	The two goals do not capture performance data for illegal drugs other than cocaine.
		Number of undocumented migrants attempting to enter U.S. by maritime routes interdicted	Management	
		Migrant interdiction effectiveness in the maritime environment	Strategic	
		Percent undocumented migrants attempting to enter U.S. by maritime routes interdicted by Coast Guard	Operational	
	Drug interdiction	Metric tons of cocaine removed	Operational	
		Removal rate for cocaine from non-commercial vessels in maritime transit zone	Management	
	Living marine resources	Fishing regulation compliance rate	Strategic	
		Percent of federal fisheries found in compliance with laws and regulations	Operational	
	Other law enforcement	Number of detected incursions of foreign fishing vessels violating U.S. waters	Strategic	
		Interdiction rate of foreign fishing vessels violating U.S. waters	Operational	

**Appendix I: Information on the Coast Guard's
Mission Programs, 11 Missions and Fiscal
Year 2015 Annual Performance Goals**

	Mission^a	Performance Goal	Goal Type^b	GAO Analysis
Maritime prevention	Ports, waterways, and coastal security (prevention activities)	Annual Maritime Transportation Security Act facility compliance rate with Transportation Worker Identification Credential regulations	Management	The performance goal does not capture response and recovery capabilities.
		Security compliance rate for high risk maritime facilities	Strategic	
	Marine safety	3-year average number of serious marine incidents	Strategic	
		Annual number of commercial mariner deaths and critical, serious & severe injuries	Operational	
		3-year average number of commercial mariner deaths and critical, serious and severe injuries	Management	
		Annual number of commercial passenger deaths and critical, serious and severe injuries	Operational	
		3-year average number of commercial passenger deaths and critical, serious and severe injuries	Management	
		Annual number of recreational boating deaths and injuries	Operational	
		5-year average number of recreational boating deaths and injuries	Management	
	Marine environmental protection (prevention activities)	Annual number of chemical discharge incidents	Operational	The goals do not describe the geographic boundaries they are measuring.
		Average number of chemical discharge incidents in the maritime environment	Management	
		Annual number of oil spills greater than 100 gallons	Operational	
		Average number of oil spills in the maritime environment	Management	
		Average age in years of rulemaking projects in the USCG portfolio	Operational	
Maritime response	Search and rescue	Percent of people in imminent danger saved in the maritime environment	Strategic	The goal does not capture incidents involving 11 or more lives lost.
		Percent of time rescue assets are on-scene within 2 hours	Management	
	Marine environmental protection (response activities)			No goal for measuring response activities.
Defense operations	Defense readiness	Defense readiness of major cutters for Department of Defense contingency planning	Operational	None of the performance goals are shared with public or

**Appendix I: Information on the Coast Guard's
Mission Programs, 11 Missions and Fiscal
Year 2015 Annual Performance Goals**

Mission^a		Performance Goal	Goal Type^b	GAO Analysis
		Defense readiness of patrol boats for contingency planning	Operational	Congress. The Coast Guard supports the National Military Strategy, which describes how the military will employ military forces. However, the goals do not describe how they support the National Military Strategy.
		Defense readiness of port security units (deployed)	Operational	
		Defense readiness of port security units (ready to deploy)	Operational	
Marine transportation system management	Aids to navigation	Availability of maritime navigation aids	Strategic	
		Annual number of navigational accidents	Operational	
		Average number of navigational accidents	Management	
	Ice operations	Percent of time high-priority waterways in Great Lakes and Eastern Seaboard open during ice season	Management	

Source: GAO analysis of the Coast Guard 2015 Annual Performance Report | GAO-18-13

^aThe Coast Guard splits the responsibilities of 2 of its 11 missions identified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 into separate Coast Guard programs. Specifically, the ports, waterways, and coastal security mission encompasses response and prevention activities. Similarly, the marine environmental protection mission encompasses response and prevention activities. The Coast Guard has other mission responsibilities not explicitly delineated in the Homeland Security Act of 2002. These include products and services for the Intelligence Community, activities and efforts to support U.S. diplomacy and international relations, bridge administration, Great Lakes pilotage and other waterways management functions supplementary to providing aids to navigation.

^bStrategic goals are used to reflect achievement of missions and are publicly reported in the DHS Annual Performance Report. Management goals are used to gauge program results and tie to resource requests that are reported to Congress through the Department of Homeland Security Congressional Budget Justification, along with the strategic goals. Additional internal performance measures are used to inform the Coast Guard's management of operations and activities. Appendix II: Selected Coast Guard Performance Results, Explanations, and Corrective Actions for Fiscal Years 2011 through 2015

Appendix II: Selected Coast Guard Performance Results, Explanations, and Corrective Actions for Fiscal Years 2011-2015

We analyzed the Coast Guard's performance results, explanations for met and unmet goals, and reported corrective actions for seven selected performance goals.¹ We selected these goals to include a variety of performance results, data sources, and Coast Guard missions. Performance information for 6 of the 7 goals is discussed below. Performance data for one of the selected goals—five year average number of recreational boating deaths and injuries goal—was not sufficiently reliable for our reporting purposes. As a result, this performance goal is excluded from this appendix.

Each page of this appendix includes several standard elements for each of the seven selected goals, including a Coast Guard image, a description of the selected performance goal, and the following two figures:

- **Performance.** Each figure on performance generally compares the Coast Guard's reported performance results to its performance targets from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. We obtained this information from the Coast Guard's Annual Performance Reports from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. For one selected goal—the percent of time high priority waterways in the Great Lakes and along the eastern seaboard are open during ice season—the information presented is limited to the Coast Guard's reported performance results and targets from fiscal years 2014 through 2015, as described below.
- **Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions.** Each figure includes the Coast Guard's explanations for its met and unmet performance goals, and reported corrective actions for unmet performance goals. These explanations and corrective actions were reported (1) by officials we met with during the course of our review,

¹Annually, the Coast Guard documents an explanation for why they did or did not meet each performance goals reported to DHS, as well as corrective actions for unmet goals. As a leading practice, Coast Guard officials reported that they also document annual performance results and corrective actions for internal performance goals included in the Coast Guard's Annual Performance Report.

including those from Coast Guard headquarters and field locations, and DHS headquarters, and (2) in DHS's Future Years Homeland Security Program system—a department-wide database used to collect performance information. The explanations and corrective actions have been summarized for this appendix.

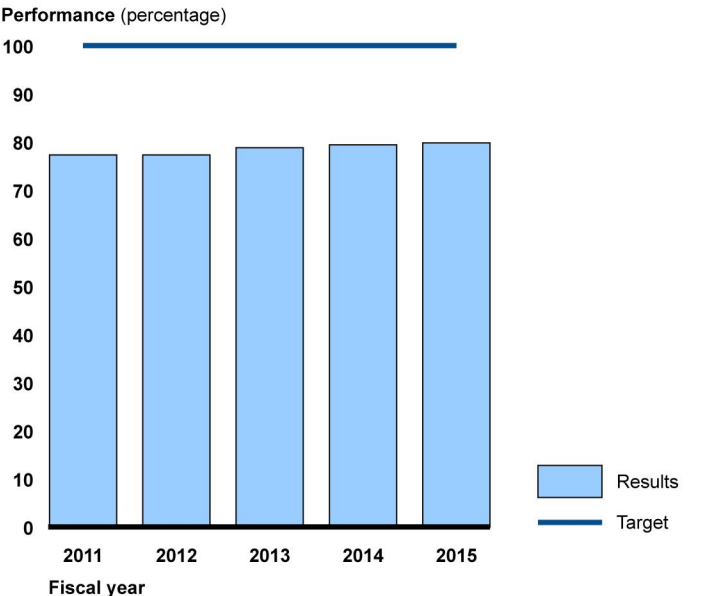
Percent of People in Imminent Danger Saved in the Maritime Environment

Mission: Search and rescue

Description: This goal measures the percent of people who were in imminent danger on the oceans and other waterways and whose lives were saved by the Coast Guard. The number of lives lost before and after the Coast Guard is notified and the numbers of persons missing at the end of search operations are factored into this percentage. The scope of this performance goal data excludes cases with 11 or more lives saved or lost in a single incident.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-18-13

Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions

	Explanation of results	Corrective actions
Unmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Factors outside of the Coast Guard’s control, such as weather, location, and incident severityLimited resourcesCoast Guard officials reported that they use a lower and more realistic internal target for management purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct data analysisConduct outreach and educationImproved resource allocationImprovements to training and protocols

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information | GAO-18-13

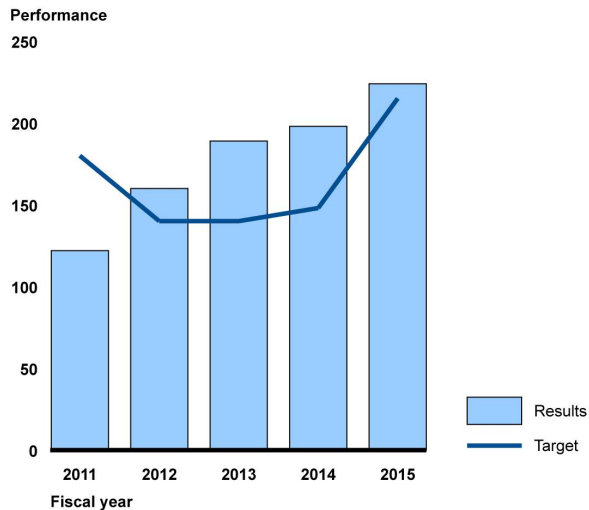
Number of Detected Incursions of Foreign Fishing Vessels Violating U.S. Waters

Mission: Other law enforcement

Description: This goal measures the number of detected illegal fishing incursions into the U.S. exclusive economic zone⁵⁹ that result in 1) significant damage or impact to U.S. fish stocks, based on volume extracted or status of stock targeted; 2) significant financial impact due to volume and value of target fish stocks; or 3) significant sovereignty concerns due to uncertainty or disagreement with foreign neighbors over the U.S. exclusive economic zone border. Incursions detected by the Coast Guard and other sources are included when the reports are judged by operational commanders as being of sufficient validity to deploy resources.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-18-13

Note: This performance goal is intended to measure deterrence. As a result, the Coast Guard strives for fewer detected incursions than the numerical target. For example, in fiscal year 2011, the Coast Guard set its target at less than or equal to 180 detected incursions, and the Coast Guard met this target with 122 detected incursions. In fiscal year 2012, the Coast Guard set its target at less than or equal to 140 detected incursions, and the Coast Guard did not meet this target with 160 detected incursions.

Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions

	Explanation of results	Corrective actions
Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the Coast Guard met its target, increased operations and effective patrolling contributed to an increase in detected incursions 	Not applicable
Unmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors outside of the Coast Guard's control, such as changes in fishing stocks Improved detection capabilities and patrol hours that led to increased detections Inherent challenges interpreting a measure of deterrence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct patrols Conduct public outreach Improve resource allocation Increase use of technology Strengthen international partnerships Conduct data analysis

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information | GAO-18-13

⁵⁹ Within the U.S. exclusive economic zone, the United States has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing natural resources, among other things. The U.S. exclusive economic zone is adjacent to the 12 nautical mile territorial sea of the United States and extends no more than 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline.

Removal Rate for Cocaine from Non-commercial Vessels in the Maritime Transit Zone

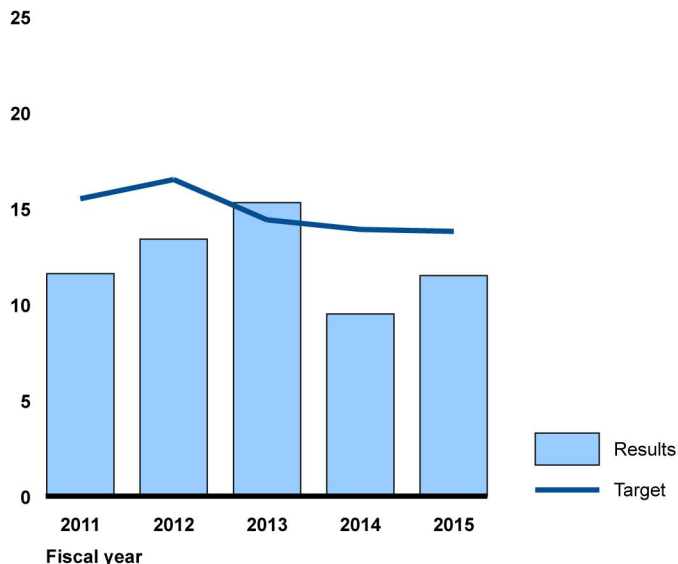
Mission: Drug interdiction

Description: This goal measures the amount of all cocaine physically seized by the Coast Guard, as well as intentionally destroyed by smugglers and not physically recovered by the Coast Guard, as a percentage of the estimated non-commercial maritime movement of cocaine, which is based on multiple sources of corroborated intelligence.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13

Performance (percentage)



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-18-13

Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions

	Explanation of results	Corrective actions
Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likely underreporting of total cocaine flow due to sequestration cuts to drug trafficking awareness activities 	Not applicable
Unmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in cocaine flow volume Insufficient resources Decreased partner support Improved tactics by drug traffickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update assets Increase use of technology Increase trained personnel Conduct data analysis Improve resource allocation Adjust strategies Strengthen partnerships

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information | GAO-18-13

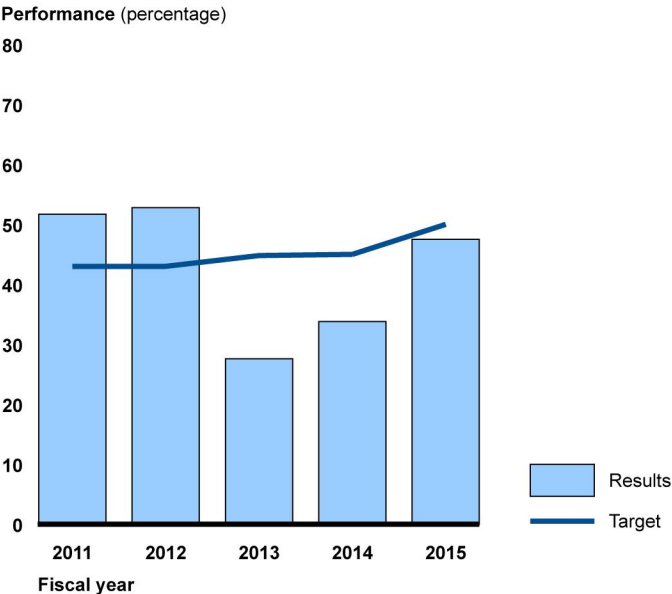
Percent of Undocumented Migrants Attempting to Enter the United States by Maritime Routes Interdicted by the Coast Guard

Mission: Migrant interdiction

Description: This goal measures the percent of undocumented migrants interdicted at sea by the Coast Guard while attempting to enter the United States, its territories, or possessions. The Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center compiles and analyzes migrant landing information, which according to officials, is obtained from the Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and other law enforcement agencies.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-18-13

Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions

	Explanation of results	Corrective actions
Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decrease in migrant capabilities	Not applicable
Unmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Factors outside of the Coast Guard’s control, such as changes in migrant flowPerceptions of policiesInsufficient resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication campaigns in foreign countriesImprove resource allocationConduct data analysisPolicy advocacy

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information | GAO-18-13

Percent of Time High Priority Waterways in the Great Lakes and along the Eastern Seaboard are Open During Ice Season

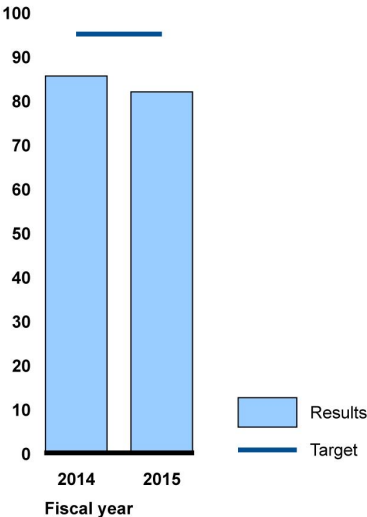
Mission: Ice operations

Description: This goal measures the amount of time Tier One Waterways in the Great Lakes and along the eastern seaboard are open to vessel transits during the icebreaking season as a percentage of the total annual ice season. Tier One waterways are those designated by waterways managers at Coast Guard District commands as the highest-priority due to geographical location or importance of cargo to public health and safety.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13

Performance (percentage)



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-18-13

Note: Prior to fiscal year 2014, the Coast Guard measured the number of days critical waterways are closed to commerce due to ice. The Coast Guard reported meeting this performance goal from fiscal years 2011 through 2013. Officials reported that changing the performance goal to measure to a percentage rather than number of days closed helps account for variations in weather and the length of the ice season.

Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions

	Explanation of results	Corrective actions
Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mild ice season	Not applicable
Unmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Severe weather conditionsLimited ability to move assets in winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strengthen partnership with CanadaModernize assetsIncrease use of science and technology

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information | GAO-18-13

Percent Reduction of all Maritime Security Risk Subject to Coast Guard Influence

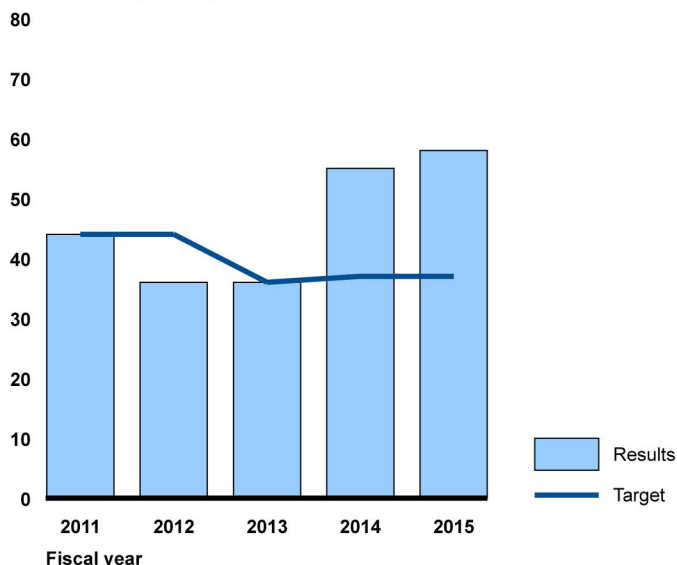
Mission: Ports, waterways, and coastal security

Description: This goal is a proxy measure of the Coast Guard's effectiveness in reducing maritime security risk. It is based on an assessment of threat, vulnerability, and potential consequences for sixteen of the most significant maritime attack scenarios, and the estimated percent of risk reduction as a result of all relevant Coast Guard maritime security efforts.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard. | GAO-18-13

Performance (percentage)



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-18-13

Summary of Coast Guard Explanations and Corrective Actions

	Explanation of results	Corrective actions
Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised modeling estimates Improved capabilities Acquisition of assets Effective prioritization of activities 	Not applicable
Unmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised modeling estimates Reduction in resource hours Gaps in mission capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise force structure Update operational requirements and training Prioritize activities Conduct data analysis Address asset shortages

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information | GAO-18-13

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

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



**Homeland
Security**

October 5, 2017

Jennifer Grover
Director, Homeland Security and Justice
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Management's Response to Draft Report: GAO-18-13, "COAST GUARD: Actions Needed to Enhance Performance Information Transparency and Monitoring"

Dear Ms. Grover:

Thank you for the opportunity to 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.

The Department is pleased to note GAO's positive recognition that the Coast Guard's performance goals are generally aligned with its statutory missions. As the principal Federal agency charged with maritime safety, security, and stewardship, the Coast Guard delivers daily value to the American public and the global maritime community. The agency's Annual Performance Plan highlights mission performance; however, the Coast Guard ultimately achieves success by leveraging its multi-mission authorities, diverse capabilities, and established partnerships to safeguard America's maritime interests. This integrated approach to mission execution better enables the Coast Guard to achieve its goals, which include the safety and security of the maritime public, our natural and economic resources, the global maritime transportation system, critical infrastructure, and the integrity of our maritime borders.

The draft report contained five recommendations with which the Department concurs. Attached find our detailed response to each 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. M. H. Crumpler".

J. M. H. CRUMPLER, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Attachment

**Attachment: DHS Management Response to Recommendations
Contained in GAO-18-13**

GAO recommended that the Commandant of the Coast Guard:

Recommendation 1: Develop new performance goals to address mission activities or explain in the Coast Guard's Annual Performance Reports (APR) why certain aspects of mission performance are measured while others are not.

Response: Concur. The Coast Guard's Office of Performance and Assessment (DCO-81) will add new measures in future Coast Guard APRs and explain what is measured and what is not, as appropriate. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): May 31, 2018.

Recommendation 2: In coordination with the Secretary of Homeland Security, make the Coast Guard's future APRs publicly available on the Coast Guard's website.

Response: Concur. The Coast Guard will make its APR available on its public website. ECD: May 31, 2018.

Recommendation 3: Coordinate with the Secretary Homeland Security, and assess the extent to which documentation on performance data reliability Performance Measure Definition Form (PMDf) and DHS and Coast Guard APRs, contain appropriate information on known data reliability limitations, and update these documents, as needed, based on the results of the assessments.

Response: Concur. The Coast Guard's DCO-81, will add a discussion of limitations for each measure as an appendix to future APRs. ECD: May 31, 2018.

Recommendation 4: Develop and document, in its APR or elsewhere, corrective actions for unmet performance goals that are measured and include timeframes for implementation.

Response: Concur. It is important to note that not every missed annual performance target necessarily justifies a corrective action plan, but where corrective action is merited the Coast Guard's DCO-81 will develop and document these in appropriate program plans. ECD: May 31, 2018.

Recommendation 5: Document, in its APR or elsewhere, its efforts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of corrective actions for unmet performance goals.

Response: Concur. The Coast Guard's DCO-81 will include in future performance plans a discussion of corrective action plan status changes from the previously published plan, as appropriate. ECD: May 31, 2018.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jennifer Grover, (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact above, Meg Ullengren (Assistant Director), Gary M. Malavenda (Analyst in Charge), David Bieler, Dominick Dale, Michele Fejfar, Eric Hauswirth, Tracey King, Benjamin T. Licht, and Kayli Westling all made key contributions to this report.

Appendix V: Accessible Data

Agency Comment Letter

Text of Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

Page 1

October 5, 2017

Jennifer Grover

Director, Homeland Security and Justice

U.S. Government Accountability Office 441 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20548

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Jim Crumpacker

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Page 2

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Related GAO Products

Coast Guard: Agency Could Better Assess Its Impact on Arctic Capability Gaps and Is Exploring Icebreaker Acquisition Options, [GAO-16-738T](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2016)

Coast Guard: Arctic Strategy Is Underway, but Agency Could Better Assess How Its Actions Mitigate Known Arctic Capability Gaps, [GAO-16-453](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 15, 2016)

Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Allocation of Assets and Determine Workforce Requirements, [GAO-16-379](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 24, 2016)

Coast Guard: Legacy Vessels' Declining Conditions Reinforce Need for More Realistic Operational Targets, [GAO-12-741](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2012)

Coast Guard: Observations on the Genesis and Progress of the Service's Modernization Program, [GAO-09-530R](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2009)

Coast Guard: Non-Homeland Security Performance Measures Are Generally Sound, but Opportunities for Improvement Exist, [GAO-06-816](#) (Washington, D.C.: August 16, 2006).

Coast Guard: Relationship between Resources Used and Results Achieved Needs to Be Clearer, [GAO-04-432](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 22, 2004)

Coast Guard: Comprehensive Blueprint Needed To Balance and Monitor Resource Use and Measure Performance for All Missions, [GAO-03-544T](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 12, 2003)

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