

PROLIFERATION SECURITY INITIATIVE

Agencies Have Adopted Policies and Procedures but Steps Needed to Meet Reporting Requirement and to Measure Results

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2003, the Bush Administration announced the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to enhance U.S. efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). PSI is not a program housed in only one agency, but instead is a set of activities with participation by multiple U.S. agencies and other countries. Congress recommended that the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State (State) establish policies, procedures, and indicators to measure results and required that they submit annual reports. It also mandated that GAO report on PSI effectiveness. In 2008, GAO likewise recommended that law enforcement agencies also establish policies, procedures, and performance indicators.

This report assesses (1) the progress relevant agencies have made since 2008 in establishing recommended PSI policies and procedures and issuing required annual reports; and (2) the extent to which PSI activities have enhanced and expanded U.S. counterproliferation efforts.

GAO reviewed and analyzed agency documents and interviewed officials from State, DOD, and other agencies with PSI responsibilities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that State and DOD provide all required expenditure information in PSI annual reports and develop a framework for measuring PSI's results. DOD partially concurred with both recommendations and State partially concurred with the reporting recommendation. State disagreed with the framework recommendation, but noted its support for analysis consistent with it.

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What GAO Found

U.S. agencies have adopted interagency guidance documents that establish PSI policies and procedures and have submitted annual reports; however, these reports do not contain expenditure data for all agencies as required by law. The agencies produced documents that contain general PSI policies and procedures. In addition, DOD and the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) developed policies and procedures specifically to guide their agencies' PSI activities. The annual reports submitted in 2009, 2010, and 2011 met requirements to describe PSI-related activities planned for future years and those that took place in the preceding year. Although the reports included an account of DOD's PSI expenditures, they did not contain all expenditures for other agencies for PSI activities as required by law.

U.S. officials participated in a range of PSI activities since 2008 to meet their objective of expanding and enhancing counterproliferation efforts, but it is unclear to what extent these activities have achieved the objective because agencies lack measures of results. The agencies either led or participated in 22 PSI activities from fiscal year 2009 through fiscal year 2011 including multilateral meetings and exercises. Officials stated that their outreach efforts contributed to increased support for PSI since GAO's 2008 report, such as the increase from 93 to 98 countries endorsing PSI. In addition, they have extended access to PSI activities to more countries that are not part of the group of 21 PSI Operational Experts Group countries, for example by holding regional planning meetings. Despite recommendations of Congress and GAO that agencies develop PSI performance indicators, DOD, State, CBP, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have not developed indicators that can be used to systematically measure progress toward the stated PSI objective. Further, the agencies have not systematically evaluated PSI activity results. Although some officials indicated plans to develop PSI performance indicators, officials from DOD and State also cited several challenges to developing indicators to measure PSI activities' results including difficulty quantifying how PSI activities improved capacity. However, GAO has previously reported that, despite such challenges, developing measures that help link activities to results is possible. PSI agencies could develop a framework that links performance measures to outcomes. For example, such a framework could link the number of participants trained to changes in national policies that strengthen participant countries' authority to interdict the shipment of WMD, their delivery systems, and related materials.