



Highlights of [GAO-08-875T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of State's (State) Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program's objectives are to provide partner nations with counterterrorism training and equipment, improve bilateral ties, and increase respect for human rights. State's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) provides policy guidance and its Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Antiterrorism Assistance (DS/T/ATA), manages program operations. GAO assessed (1) State's guidance for determining ATA priorities, (2) how State coordinates ATA with other counterterrorism programs, (3) the extent State established ATA program goals and measures, and (4) State's reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance. This statement is based on a February 2008, GAO report titled *Combating Terrorism: State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes*, GAO-08-336 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 29, 2008).

What GAO Recommends

In its report, GAO suggested that Congress reconsider the requirement that State prepare an annual report on U.S. counterterrorism assistance. GAO also recommended that State review its use of needs assessments, and measures for assessing the ATA program. State generally agreed with the recommendations regarding the ATA program, and supported the matter GAO suggested for congressional consideration.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-875T](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

COMBATING TERRORISM

Guidance for State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program Is Limited and State Does Not Systematically Assess Outcomes

What GAO Found

S/CT provides minimal guidance to help prioritize ATA program recipients, and S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not systematically align ATA assistance with U.S. assessments of foreign partner counterterrorism needs. S/CT provided policy guidance to DS/T/ATA through quarterly meetings and a tiered list of priority countries, but the list did not provide guidance on country counterterrorism-related program goals, objectives, or training priorities. S/CT and DS/T/ATA also did not consistently use country-specific needs assessments and program reviews to plan assistance.

S/CT had established mechanisms to coordinate the ATA program with other U.S. international efforts to combat terrorism. S/CT held interagency meetings with officials from the Department of State, Defense, Justice, and Treasury and other agencies as well as ambassador-level regional strategic coordinating meetings. GAO did not find any significant duplication or overlap among the various U.S. international counterterrorism efforts.

State had made progress in establishing goals and intended outcomes for the ATA program, but S/CT and DS/T/ATA did not systematically assess the outcomes and, as a result, could not determine the effectiveness of program assistance. For example, although sustainability is a principal focus, S/CT and DS/T/ATA had not set clear measures of sustainability or integrated sustainability into program planning.

State reporting on U.S. counterterrorism assistance abroad was incomplete and inaccurate. S/CT had not provided a congressionally mandated annual report to Congress on U.S. government-wide assistance related to combating international terrorism since 1996. After 1996, S/CT has only submitted to Congress annual reports on the ATA program, such as the number of students trained and courses offered. Moreover, these reports contained inaccurate program information. Additionally, the reports lacked comprehensive information of the results on program assistance that would be useful to Congress.