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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-697](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

Three U.S. national strategies, developed in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, directed U.S. law enforcement agencies (LEA) to focus on the prevention of terrorist attacks. The strategies called for LEAs to intensify their efforts to help foreign nations identify, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists. GAO was asked to assess (1) the guidance for LEAs to assist foreign nations to identify, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists and (2) the extent to which LEAs have implemented this guidance.

## What GAO Recommends

We recommend that the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) ensure that the implementing guidance for its NCTC's plan for combating terrorism articulates a clear strategy for using LEAs to help foreign nations combat terrorism. We also recommend that State, Justice, and DHS explore enhancements to overseas coordination mechanisms and develop clear guidance and performance monitoring to enhance efforts to help foreign nations combat terrorism.

NCTC stated it had already begun to implement our recommendations. DHS generally agreed with our recommendations. State and Justice stated they would consider ways to improve overseas coordination, but did not indicate whether they concurred with our other recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-697](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-697).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess Ford at (202) 512-4128 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

## COMBATING TERRORISM

# Law Enforcement Agencies Lack Directives to Assist Foreign Nations to Identify, Disrupt, and Prosecute Terrorists

## What GAO Found

Following the 9/11 attacks, the President issued a series of strategies that provided broad direction for overseas law enforcement efforts to assist foreign nations to identify, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists. However, these strategies did not articulate which LEAs should implement the guidance to enhance efforts to help foreign nations combat terrorism or how they should do so. While one of the strategies tasked State with developing and coordinating U.S. efforts to combat terrorism abroad, we found State did not develop or coordinate the development of a plan to use the combined capabilities of U.S. LEAs to help foreign nations identify, disrupt, or prosecute terrorists. In December 2004, Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which charged the NCTC with developing a plan to use all elements of national power, including LEAs, to combat terrorism. NCTC officials told us they had drafted a general plan, which was approved by the President in June of 2006. According to NCTC, State, Justice, and DHS officials, implementing guidance for the plan is under development, and they would not discuss the contents of the plan or the guidance.

Some LEAs have increased efforts to help foreign nations identify, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists. For example, DHS has implemented its Container Security Initiative to screen U.S.-bound cargo at foreign ports, and State has expanded its Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program. However, we found that because most LEAs, with the exception of the FBI, have not been given clear guidance, they lacked clearly defined roles and responsibilities on helping foreign nations identify, disrupt, and prosecute terrorists. In one country we visited, the lack of clear roles and responsibilities between two U.S. LEAs may have compromised several joint operations intended to identify and disrupt potential terrorist activities, according to the U.S. and foreign nation LEAs. In addition, we found LEAs generally lacked guidance on using resources to assist foreign nations in addressing terrorist vulnerabilities and generally lacked performance monitoring systems and formal structures for sharing information and collaborating. We also found that, because comprehensive needs assessments were not conducted, LEAs may not be tailoring their full range of training and assistance to address key terrorism vulnerabilities in foreign countries.

### U.S. ATA-Trained Foreign Police Conduct Counterterrorism Exercises



Source: GAO.