

## Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government spends billions of dollars on information technology (IT) each year, with such investments accounting for at least \$79 billion in fiscal year 2011. Given the size of these investments, it is important that federal agencies avoid duplicative investments when possible to ensure the most efficient use of resources. GAO has previously reported on initiatives under way to address potentially duplicative IT investments—i.e., investments providing similar functions across the government. GAO was asked to review the extent to which potentially duplicative IT investments exist within three categories at selected agencies (the Departments of Defense (DOD), Energy (DOE), and Homeland Security (DHS)) and actions these agencies are taking to address them. To accomplish this, GAO analyzed budget data on agency IT investments, reviewed agency information related to efforts to address duplication, and interviewed agency officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD and DOE report on the progress of efforts to identify and eliminate duplication, where appropriate. GAO is also recommending that DOD, DOE, and DHS correct misclassifications of investments. DOD and DHS agreed with the recommendations. DOE generally agreed with the first recommendation, but disagreed with parts of the second recommendation regarding the number of misclassified investments. However, GAO believes the number is accurate.

View [GAO-12-241](#). For more information, contact David A. Powner at (202) 512-9286 or [pownerd@gao.gov](mailto:pownerd@gao.gov).

# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## Departments of Defense and Energy Need to Address Potentially Duplicative Investments

### What GAO Found

Although the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Energy (DOE) use various investment review processes to identify duplicative investments, GAO found that 37 of its sample of 810 investments were potentially duplicative (see table). These investments account for about \$1.2 billion in total information technology (IT) spending for fiscal years 2007 through 2012. For example, GAO identified four DOD Navy personnel assignment investments—one system for officers, one for enlisted personnel, one for reservists, and a general assignment system—each of which is responsible for managing similar functions. While GAO did not identify any potentially duplicative investments at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) within its sample, DHS officials have independently identified several duplicative investments and systems.

#### Potentially Duplicative Investments

| Department                                 | Purpose                            | Number of investments   | Planned and actual expenditures (\$ in millions) |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| DOD  | Acquisition Management             | 4                       | \$407  |
|  | Aviation Maintenance and Logistics | 2                       | \$85   |
|  | Civilian Personnel Management      | 2                       | \$504  |
|  | Contract Management                | 10                      | \$58   |
|  | Housing Management                 | 2                       | \$5  |
|  | Personnel Assignment Management    | 6                       | \$40   |
|  | Promotion Rating                   | 2                       | \$3  |
|  | Workforce Management               | 3                       | \$109  |
|  | DOE                                | Back-end Infrastructure | 3  |
| Electronic Records and Document Management |                                    | 3                       | \$7  |
| <b>Total</b>                               |                                    | <b>37</b>               | <b>\$1,219</b>                                   |

Source: GAO analysis of agencies' data.

DOD and DOE officials offered a variety of reasons for the potential duplication, such as decentralized governance and a lack of control over certain facilities. Further complicating agencies' ability to identify and eliminate duplicative investments is that investments are, in certain cases, misclassified by function. Until agencies correctly categorize their investments, they cannot be confident that their investments are not duplicative.

DHS has taken action to improve its processes for identifying and eliminating duplicative investments. For example, through reviewing portfolios of IT investments, DHS has identified much, and eliminated some, duplicative functionality in certain investments. Additionally, DOD and DOE have recently initiated plans to address potential duplication in many of the investments GAO identified, which include consolidating or eliminating systems. While these efforts may eventually yield results, they have not yet led to the elimination of duplication. For example, while DOD and DOE have specific plans to improve their IT investment review processes, officials did not provide examples of duplicative investments that had been consolidated or eliminated. Until DOD and DOE demonstrate progress on these efforts, the agencies will be unable to provide assurance that they are avoiding investment in unnecessary systems.