

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-119](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

DHS and its components have homeland security and law enforcement missions that require agents and officers to carry and be proficient in the use of firearms. DHS has more than 70,000 firearm-carrying personnel—the most of any department. DOJ has the next largest with approximately 69,000 firearm-carrying personnel. GAO was asked to examine DHS's ammunition purchases and management of ammunition and firearms.

This report addresses trends in DHS's ammunition purchases since fiscal year 2008, how DHS's purchases compare with DOJ's, and what factors affect DHS's purchase decisions. GAO analyzed data from six DHS and three DOJ components that have law enforcement missions, require agents and officers to carry firearms, and purchase ammunition themselves or through their respective departments. Specifically, GAO analyzed data on ammunition purchases, usage, costs, and inventories, among other things, for fiscal years 2008 through 2013 for DHS, and for fiscal years 2011 through 2013 for DOJ. GAO assessed the reliability of these data and found them sufficiently reliable. Data on DOJ ammunition purchases prior to fiscal year 2011 were not readily available; therefore, GAO excluded them, as discussed in the report.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any recommendations.

View [GAO-14-119](#). For more information, contact David Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or MaurerD@gao.gov.

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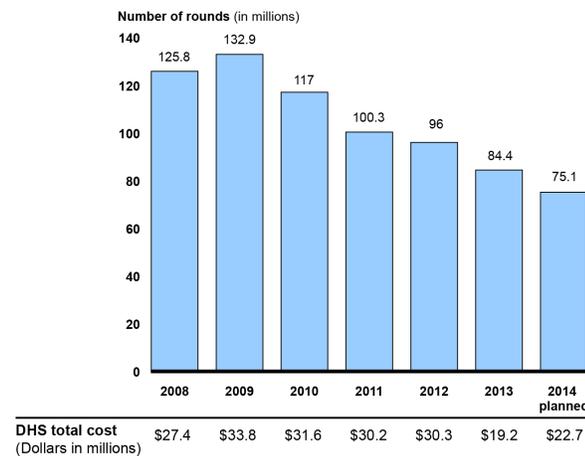
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Ammunition Purchases Have Declined since 2009

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) annual ammunition purchases have declined since fiscal year 2009 and are comparable in number to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) ammunition purchases. In fiscal year 2013, DHS purchased 84 million rounds of ammunition, which is less than DHS's ammunition purchases over the past 5 fiscal years, as shown in the figure below. DHS component officials said the decline in ammunition purchases in fiscal year 2013 was primarily a result of budget constraints, which meant reducing the number of training classes, and drawing on their ammunition inventories. From fiscal years 2008 through 2013, DHS purchased an average of 109 million rounds of ammunition for training, qualification, and operational needs, according to DHS data. DHS's ammunition purchases over the 6-year period equates to an average of 1,200 rounds purchased per firearm-carrying agent or officer per year. Over the past 3 fiscal years (2011-2013), DHS purchased an average of 1,000 rounds per firearm-carrying agent or officer and selected DOJ components purchased 1,300 rounds per firearm-carrying agent or officer.

Total Department of Homeland Security Ammunition Purchases for Fiscal Years 2008 through 2013



Source: GAO analysis of DHS data.

DHS ammunition purchases are driven primarily by firearm training and qualification requirements. Most DHS firearm-carrying personnel are required to qualify four times per year, though requirements vary by component, as do the number of rounds of ammunition typically used for training and qualification. DHS components also reported considering other factors when making ammunition purchase decisions, such as changes in firearms, usage rates, and ammunition inventories. DHS components maintain inventories of ammunition to help ensure they have sufficient ammunition for the training and operational needs of their officers, as there can be months-long delays between placing an order for ammunition and receiving it. As of October 2013, DHS estimates it had approximately 159 million rounds in inventory, enough to last about 22 months to meet the training and operational needs of its firearm-carrying personnel. Ammunition inventory data provided by DOJ components indicated that inventory ranged from about 13 months' worth to about 20 months' worth.