

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-171SP](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Each year, DHS invests billions of dollars in major acquisition programs. In fiscal year 2014, DHS planned to invest \$10.7 billion in these programs. DHS's acquisition management activities have been on GAO's High Risk List, in part due to program management, funding, workforce, and requirements issues.

Congress requested GAO assess DHS's major acquisition programs. This report addresses the extent to which DHS's major acquisition programs: (1) are on track to meet their schedules and cost estimates; (2) have successfully completed operational testing; and (3) are facing common issues department-wide.

GAO assessed all 14 of DHS's largest acquisition programs that were in the process of obtaining new capabilities as of June 2014, and 8 other major acquisition programs GAO or DHS identified were at risk of poor outcomes to provide additional insight into factors that lead to poor acquisition outcomes. For all 22 programs, GAO reviewed documents required by DHS policy, and met program representatives and headquarters officials responsible for overseeing the programs.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO continues to believe DHS should fully implement the September 2012 recommendation. GAO also recommends DHS address all KPPs in its test assessments, ensure TSA programs' future baselines capture historical changes, and ensure USCG funding plans presented to Congress are comprehensive. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-15-171SP](#). For more information, contact Michele Mackin at (202) 512-4841 or [mackinm@gao.gov](mailto:mackinm@gao.gov).

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## HOMELAND SECURITY ACQUISITIONS

### Major Program Assessments Reveal Actions Needed to Improve Accountability

## What GAO Found

GAO found two of the 22 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs it reviewed were on track to meet the initial schedule and cost parameters established after DHS's current acquisition policy went into effect in November 2008. Fourteen programs had experienced schedule slips, or schedule slips and cost growth, including five programs GAO reviewed because they were at-risk of poor outcomes and nine others. These programs' cost estimates increased by \$9.7 billion, or 18 percent. GAO was unable to assess six programs because DHS leadership had not yet approved baselines establishing their schedules and cost estimates even though these baselines are required by DHS policy. In September 2012, GAO recommended DHS ensure all programs obtain department-level approval for their baselines, and DHS concurred. Individual assessments of each of the 22 programs are presented in appendix I.

#### GAO Assessment of 22 Major DHS Acquisition Programs

Total number of programs GAO assessed	Programs on track to meet cost and schedule parameters	Programs with schedule slips	Programs with schedule slips and cost growth	Programs that lacked approved schedules and cost estimates
22	2	7	7	6

Source: GAO analysis of DHS documentation and data. | GAO-15-171SP

The 22 programs are at different stages of operational testing, and assessments did not always address the key performance parameters (KPP) required to meet the DHS mission. Nineteen of the programs had delivered capabilities to operators, DHS's Director of Operational Test and Evaluation had assessed operational test results for 13 of these programs, and six had passed the testing. One of these six programs did not meet all of its KPPs, and it was unclear whether two of the other programs had done so because the test assessments did not explicitly address the KPPs. GAO found such ambiguity in 11 of 30 test assessments DHS produced from 2010 to 2014. The risks and benefits of deploying capability without operational testing vary on a program-by-program basis. However, when programs do conduct operational testing, DHS leadership would be better informed to make deployment decisions if it consistently received documentation clearly stating whether systems have met all of their KPPs.

DHS is taking steps to address enduring challenges, but certain issues may hinder oversight. DHS acquisition programs continue to face staffing, funding, and requirements issues, which increase the likelihood that acquisition programs' schedules will slip and costs will grow. DHS leadership has taken steps to address these challenges. In response to a prior GAO recommendation, DHS established that it would specifically address funding issues during all program reviews. However, it will likely take years to fully resolve the challenges. Additionally, GAO found that certain issues were prevalent at particular components. Both of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) programs GAO reviewed have changed their scope significantly over time, but these changes are not clearly identified in their current baselines, making it difficult to assess how well the programs have been executed. In fiscal year 2014, the funding plans DHS presented to Congress for the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) acquisition programs were incomplete, obscuring affordability issues GAO has reported on since 2011. These component-specific issues make it more challenging for DHS leadership and Congress to exercise oversight.