

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-284T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives.

Why GAO Did This Study

Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive weapons, also known as weapons of mass destruction (WMD), have the potential to kill thousands of people in a single incident. In 2013 Congress directed DHS to review its WMD programs, including the consolidation of CBRNE mission functions. DHS recently notified Congress that consolidation would begin in December 2017.

This testimony is based on GAO findings from an August 2016 report on (1) the extent to which DHS's CBRNE consolidation proposal assessed the benefits and limitations of consolidation and (2) GAO's key practices from past organizational transformations that could benefit the CBRNE consolidation effort. GAO reviewed DHS consolidation planning documents, interviewed relevant officials and obtained selected updated information on DHS planning efforts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO made two recommendations to DHS in 2016 to (1) complete, document, and make available analyses of key questions related to its consolidation proposal; and (2) use the key mergers and organizational transformation practices identified in GAO's previous work. DHS did not concur with the first recommendation and it was closed as not implemented. DHS concurred with the second recommendation and has not yet implemented it. GAO will continue to monitor DHS's efforts to address the second recommendation.

View [GAO-18-284T](#). For more information, contact Chris Currie at (404) 679-1875 or curriec@gao.gov

December 2017

HOMELAND SECURITY

DHS's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear, Program Consolidation Efforts

What GAO Found

GAO's prior work has shown that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) should complete, document, and make available analyses of key questions related to its chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosives (CBRNE) consolidation proposal. In August 2016, we reported that several key factors were not included when DHS evaluated its organizational consolidation of CBRNE functions. For example, DHS did not fully assess and document potential problems that could result from consolidation or include a comparison of benefits and costs. Further, DHS conducted limited external stakeholder outreach, thus the proposal may not sufficiently account for stakeholder concerns. Attention to these key areas, identified from GAO's analysis of previous organizational consolidations, would help provide DHS, Congress, and other stakeholders, such as DHS components with assurance that important aspects of effective organizational changes are addressed as part of the agency's CBRNE reorganization decision-making process. GAO previously recommended that DHS complete, document, and make available analyses of key questions related to its consolidation proposal, including: (1) what problems, if any, consolidation may create; (2) a comparison of the benefits and costs the consolidation may entail; and (3) a broader range of external stakeholder input including a discussion of how it was obtained and considered. DHS did not concur, asserting that the recommendation did not acknowledge the extent to which these questions were discussed both internally within DHS and externally with Congress and that DHS's decision to consolidate CBRNE functions had already been made which would make additional analysis redundant. GAO closed this recommendation as not implemented. While GAO has not fully assessed DHS's most recent reorganization plans, GAO continues to believe that documenting information and analyses used to assess the benefits and limitations of its consolidation plan would assist DHS in fully demonstrating how its proposal will lead to an integrated, high-performance organization.

GAO's prior work found that key mergers and organizational transformation practices could further benefit DHS in its proposed CBRNE consolidation. GAO reported in July 2003 on key practices and implementation steps for mergers and organizational transformations that range from ensuring top leadership drives the transformation to involving employees in the implementation process to obtain their ideas and gain their ownership for the transformation. In August 2016, GAO recommended that DHS use key mergers and organizational transformation practices identified in GAO's previous work to help ensure that lessons learned from other reorganizations are considered during the consolidation effort. DHS concurred with the recommendation and stated in its October 2017 consolidation notice to Congress that it will consult the practices during consolidation implementation. GAO will monitor DHS's implementation of the key practices which will help to ensure that lessons learned from other organizations are considered during the consolidation effort.