

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-27](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

DHS is the third-largest federal department, with budget authority of approximately \$60 billion. Since its inception in 2003, DHS has faced challenges strengthening its multiple management systems and processes. Some Members of Congress said that DHS's components' budget requests do not provide sufficient detail to allow them to distinguish between funding for mission and M&A activities. GAO was asked to provide information on what DHS spends on M&A activities, including spending by its components since fiscal year 1999.

This report addresses the following questions: (1) How have select DHS components defined and identified their M&A activities and spending, and to what extent are M&A data available from fiscal years 1999 through 2013? (2) How has DHS identified M&A spending department-wide, and to what extent has DHS defined M&A activities and taken steps to enhance efforts to collect M&A data? GAO analyzed documents, such as DHS's budget execution reports, and efforts to identify spending on M&A activities since fiscal year 1999. GAO interviewed officials from eight DHS components, selected on the basis of their budget authority, which in total accounts for nearly 88 percent of DHS's fiscal year 2013 budget authority. Though not generalizable, the interviews provided insights.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS implement a mechanism to assess and correct M&A data entered by components into the PDM. DHS concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-14-27](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

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DHS MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION SPENDING

Reliable Data Could Help DHS Better Estimate Resource Requests

What GAO Found

Officials from all eight Department of Homeland Security (DHS) components in GAO's review define management and administration (M&A) activities—activities that help agencies achieve their mission and program goals—differently, and while component officials said they can identify M&A spending, limitations exist in obtaining spending data from fiscal years 1999 through 2013. Officials from four of the eight components define their M&A activities according to the activities funded through their appropriations accounts and programs, projects, or activities (PPA) that are M&A in nature. For example, officials from the Transportation Security Administration said its M&A activities are those found within three PPAs within its Transportation Security Support appropriations account. The remaining four components each define M&A activities differently, and those definitions are not tied to activities contained in specific appropriations accounts. For example, the Coast Guard's M&A activities are those associated with headquarters and its service centers (e.g., personnel support), according to officials. According to component officials, the eight components GAO reviewed can identify their M&A spending, but currently do not because they are not required to do so by the department. Officials from seven of the eight components said they could provide M&A spending data for some, but not all, fiscal years since 1999 because of changes in their financial systems, among other reasons. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials stated that FEMA could provide data since fiscal year 1999. Because components define M&A differently, have different methods for identifying spending, and limitations exist in obtaining data, it is not possible to compare components' M&A spending data from fiscal years 1999 through 2013.

DHS has not identified the department's total spending on M&A activities, but has identified some M&A spending through DHS's Efficiency Review—an effort to identify opportunities to improve efficiency—and the Campaign to Cut Waste—a government-wide effort to reduce administrative spending. DHS is also taking steps to define and collect data on M&A activities, but has encountered difficulties in implementing these steps. Specifically, in 2010, DHS developed a common definition of M&A in conjunction with the Future Years Homeland Security Program (FYHSP) System Program Data Module (PDM) for components to submit resource allocation requests for future years by activity type: mission/operational, mission support, and business support/M&A. However, DHS is unable to reliably estimate what percentage of its requests are identified as M&A because 4 out of 15 components did not enter all appropriate business support/M&A activities and 1 component did not enter any business support/M&A activities, among other errors, which DHS officials said are a result of manual data entry and components not adhering to the guidance in the user manual. DHS does not have a mechanism in place to work with the components to correct data errors in the FYHSP System PDM. By implementing a mechanism to assess whether components have entered the appropriate M&A activities into the PDM, and working with the components to correct the data, as needed, DHS would be better positioned to reliably estimate and report to external stakeholders what percentage of DHS's resource allocations requests are identified as M&A.