

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-57](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Complex national security challenges—including nuclear proliferation and terrorist attacks—require a federal government workforce that can collaborate effectively across agency lines. Congress established the section 1107 Interagency Rotation Program in which national security personnel could be assigned to work at another agency for professional development purposes and to enhance the government's ability to collaborate and respond effectively to such challenges. Section 1107 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 included a provision for GAO to review the program. This report provides an assessment of the extent to which actions have been taken to establish and implement the Interagency Rotation Program, as required by law.

GAO analyzed actions taken by the Committee and assessed its Strategy against 17 statutory requirements; reviewed other supporting documentation; and interviewed OPM, OMB, and Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security officials on the status of the program.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OPM, in collaboration with the Committee, establish a clear leadership and oversight structure to guide implementation of the Interagency Rotation Program and work with the departments and agencies to identify and take action on necessary next steps for implementation. OPM generally concurred with the recommendations, but raised issues primarily about the roles and responsibilities that GAO addresses in the report.

View [GAO-16-57](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov

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NATIONAL SECURITY PERSONNEL

Committed Leadership Is Needed for Implementation of Interagency Rotation Program

What GAO Found

As required by section 1107 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013, the Committee on National Security Personnel (Committee) has taken steps to establish the Interagency Rotation Program for national security personnel, including developing a National Security Human Capital Strategy (Strategy). However, implementation of the program has languished and no personnel have participated in the program as of September 2015.

The Committee was established within the Executive Office of the President and consists of representatives from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Office of Management and Budget, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and the Departments of Defense, State, and Homeland Security. The Committee issued the Strategy in March 2014, which addresses 13 of the 17 statutory requirements. For instance, the Strategy discusses, among other things, training and education requirements, prerequisites or requirements for participation, and performance measures to be used for personnel participating in the program. The Strategy also partially addresses 2 requirements, but does not address 2 other requirements, including providing that, at a minimum, 20 employees would participate in the section 1107 program in each of the first 4 fiscal years after the NDAA was enacted. GAO had no basis to assess 2 additional requirements, also related to the program's implementation and reporting on performance measures, because these requirements are contingent on actions that had not yet occurred.

Implementing the section 1107 Interagency Rotation Program has languished because there has been limited leadership and oversight of the program, including necessary actions to be taken by the departments, agencies, and other organizations to complete their assigned roles, responsibilities, and tasks. The Strategy and other documents specifically assign roles, responsibilities, and tasks to the Committee on National Security Personnel, OPM, the Communities of Practice, and the participating departments and agencies. For instance, OPM is tasked with issuing guidance on the rights and responsibilities of employees returning from rotational service, but OPM officials told GAO that they have not done so and could not give timeframes for completion. Similarly, participating departments and agencies are tasked with identifying particular positions and personnel for rotations, but they have not used the procedures laid out in the Strategy because officials said they needed further guidance from OPM. OPM officials stated that the departments and agencies do not need further guidance from them to proceed with their assigned roles, responsibilities, and tasks. Importantly, the Strategy specifically identifies that the Committee will work with OPM to implement the Strategy. Further, officials that GAO interviewed stated they perceive that OPM is the lead for the program. Officials also noted that differing opinions about next steps have resulted in action not being taken on some assigned roles, responsibilities, and tasks, including the issuance of guidance. Without a clear leadership and oversight structure for the section 1107 program and efforts to identify and take action on next steps for implementation, it is unlikely that implementation of the program will move forward.