

DHS Annual Assessment

Most Programs Are Meeting Current Goals, but Some Continue to Face Cost and Schedule Challenges



Disaster Response

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Border Security



Transportation Security

Why GAO Did This Study

To help execute its many critical missions, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) plans to spend more than \$4 billion on its portfolio of major acquisition programs—those with life-cycle costs generally over \$300 million—in fiscal year 2024. DHS acquisition management was removed from GAO’s High-Risk Series in 2023.

The Explanatory Statement accompanying the DHS Appropriations Act, 2015, included a provision for GAO to review DHS’s major acquisitions on an ongoing basis. This report, GAO’s ninth review, assesses the extent to which selected DHS major acquisition programs are meeting their baseline cost, schedule, and performance goals.

GAO selected and reviewed 26 of DHS’s largest acquisition programs, including those that GAO identified as at risk of poor outcomes, to determine program status as of September 30, 2023. To conduct this work, GAO reviewed key acquisition documents; collected cost, schedule, and performance information; and interviewed DHS officials.

View [GAO-24-106573](#). For more information, contact Travis J. Masters at (202) 512-4841 or masterst@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

DHS invests billions of dollars annually to acquire systems that help secure the border, increase marine safety, screen travelers, enhance cybersecurity, and execute a wide variety of other operations.

Cost and schedule status. Of the 26 DHS acquisition programs that GAO selected to review, 16 had department-approved acquisition program baselines—a summary of measurable goals indicating how the system will perform, when it will be delivered, and what it will cost. Fifteen of the 16 programs met their current cost and schedule goals, while one program was in breach status in fiscal year 2023. The Homeland Advanced Recognition Technology program breached its schedule due to continued technical challenges and contributing financial constraints associated with increment 1 development. Further, some programs experienced ongoing challenges, while two of DHS’s costliest programs reported significant cost growth and delays.

- The Offshore Patrol Cutter continues to face significant cost and schedule challenges despite a program restructure in 2020. The program has incurred cost growth of \$6 billion since 2012 and it faces delays of almost 1.5 years for delivery of the first four cutters.
- The Polar Security Cutter program increased its cost baseline by \$3.5 billion and its lead ship delivery goal has been delayed by more than 2 years as the program faces continued challenges with achieving a stable design.

Thirteen of the 16 programs we reviewed have rebaselined—established new cost, schedule, or performance goals—at least once since their initial baselines were established. Some have rebaselined due to scope changes like increasing quantity, while others have rebaselined due to insufficient understanding of requirements and complexity of the work to be accomplished. In addition, five programs requested schedule adjustments to address COVID-19 effects.

Performance status. All seven of the 16 programs GAO reviewed that completed testing in 2023, met their current performance goals. These programs completed operational test and evaluation for at least one increment or segment in operationally realistic conditions, which determines whether a system can perform as required. The remaining nine programs have either not yet started operational test and evaluation or testing is ongoing.