

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107269](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Homeland security threats continue to evolve and include challenges ranging from terrorist attacks to natural disasters. This situation underscores the need for DHS to periodically examine and strengthen the nation's homeland security strategy.

The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act require that every 4 years DHS—in consultation with other stakeholders—conduct a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, which is a comprehensive examination of the nation's homeland security strategy.

GAO was asked to assess DHS's 2023 review and report. This report assesses the extent to which (1) DHS met statutory requirements and (2) DHS and its stakeholders use the report to execute their homeland security roles.

GAO analyzed relevant statutes and documentation of the review and report. GAO also interviewed stakeholders, including representatives of eight DHS component agencies; three other federal agencies, such as the Department of Defense; and 11 external stakeholders, such as state agencies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS develop and document processes and procedures for (1) conducting the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review to ensure it meets all statutory requirements in future reviews and (2) engaging stakeholders, including when and how to engage stakeholders in the review. DHS concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-25-107269](#). For more information, contact Chris Currie at CurrieC@gao.gov.

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QUADRENNIAL HOMELAND SECURITY REVIEW

Improvements Needed to Meet Statutory Requirements and Engage Stakeholders

What GAO Found

GAO found that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not fully meet 10 of the 21 identified statutory requirements for the 2023 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review and accompanying report. Among other elements, DHS did not fully meet requirements for prioritizing missions, providing a budget plan to meet those missions, and issuing the report by the established time frame. For example, DHS was to issue the report every 4 years beginning in fiscal year 2009, however, DHS did not issue a report for 9 years following issuance of its 2014 report. As a result, DHS drafted a new strategic plan during that time without affirming the homeland security priority missions through the review. DHS officials could not explain why DHS did not fully meet the statutory requirements because there is limited documentation of the steps taken for conducting the review. The figure below depicts phases for conducting the review, but DHS documentation does not have details on the processes and procedures for conducting each phase. Developing and documenting processes and procedures for conducting the review could better position DHS to meet all statutory requirements and use timely information in planning its efforts to address constantly evolving homeland security threats.

Phases for Conducting the 2023 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review			
Phase 1: Research and analysis	Phase 2: Consultations	Phase 3: Drafting and review	Phase 4: Finalization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interim National Security GuidanceThreat assessmentsRisk assessmentsBudget and evaluation processesComponent strategic plansDepartmental strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">DHS leadershipDHS ComponentsOther Federal agenciesState and local governments and law enforcementFaith-based communitiesCongressPrivate sectorAcademiaNonprofit sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Initial framingIssue-based reviewsFull draft reportDHS review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interagency reviewDeliveryShift into implementation phase, subject to appropriations

Source: GAO presentation of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) information. | GAO-25-107269

GAO found that DHS has processes to use the report as a foundation for making annual resource decisions. Specifically, DHS has internal guidance for using it to inform its strategic plan and budget. However, the effectiveness of this guidance and use of the report depends on DHS issuing the report prior to its Strategic Plan. Not issuing the report on time could lead to a strategic plan that does not take into account the most recent homeland security environment. Additionally, DHS is statutorily required to consult with certain stakeholders, including other federal agencies and state agencies, when conducting the review. DHS states in its 2023 report that DHS's success in accomplishing its missions depends on partnerships with these stakeholders, but stakeholders GAO contacted said they generally do not use the report. Developing and documenting processes and procedures for engaging stakeholders may help ensure that DHS solicits and incorporates meaningful input from all stakeholders. It could also result in a better understanding of all stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in their partnerships with DHS.