



# COAST GUARD

## Relationship between Resources Used and Results Achieved Needs to Be Clearer

Highlights of [GAO-04-432](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Oceans, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, U.S. Senate

### Why GAO Did This Study

The Coast Guard has responsibility for protecting America's ports, waterways, and waterside facilities from terrorist attacks. At the same time, the Coast Guard remains responsible for many other missions important to the nation's interests, such as conducting search and rescue and protecting important fishing grounds.

GAO's past work found that despite substantial budget increases, the Coast Guard's extensive homeland security responsibilities resulted in a reduction in the levels at which the agency's ship, boat, and aircraft resources were applied to non-homeland security programs. GAO was asked to update and expand this work by analyzing: the trends in resource usage, the trends in performance results, and the implications of these trends.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Coast Guard develop a time frame for proceeding with plans to more accurately account for resources expended, and ensure that it develops a strategy for identifying the intervening factors affecting performance results, and systematically assesses the relationship between these factors, resources used, and results achieved. The Coast Guard reviewed a draft of this report and generally agreed with the facts and recommendations presented, but did not take a formal position on the recommendations.

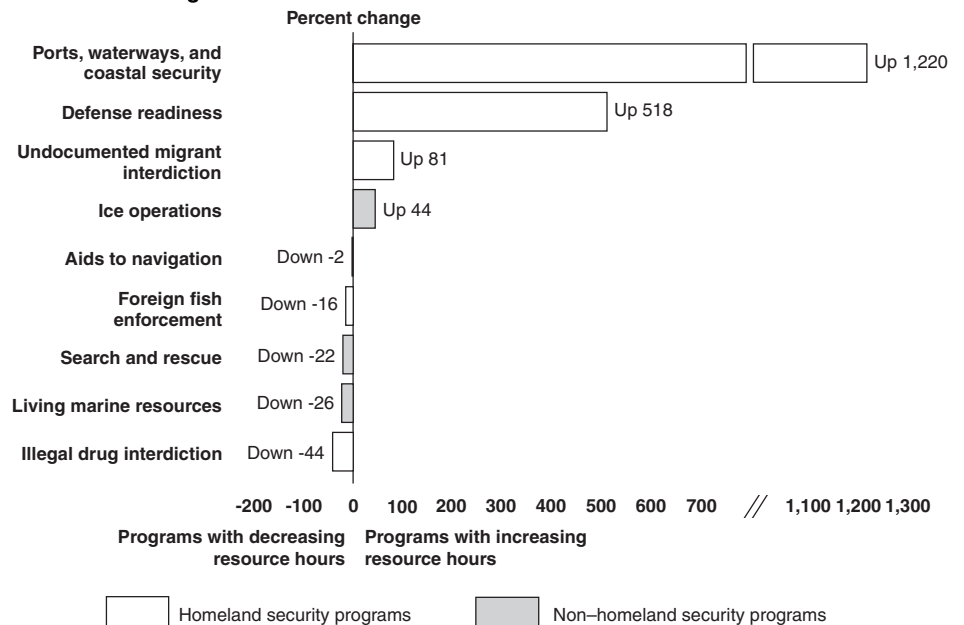
[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-432](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-432).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Margaret Wrightson at (415) 904-2200 or [wrightsonm@gao.gov](mailto:wrightsonm@gao.gov).

### What GAO Found

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Coast Guard has experienced a 32 percent increase in its budget, a 9 percent increase in personnel, and major shifts in the hours in which its ships, boats, and aircraft are used in the agency's various programs. Hours these resources are used for most homeland security programs greatly exceed their pre-September 11 levels, in part because of an infusion of new boats, with the number of hours for the ports, waterways, and coastal security program up more than twelve-fold. (See fig. below.) Conversely, with the exception of hours for ice operations, hours dedicated to each non-homeland security program remained below their pre-September 11 levels.

**Percentage Change in Boat, Ship, and Aircraft Resource Hours, by Program, Pre-September 11 Baseline through Fiscal Year 2003**



Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard resource hour data.

The Coast Guard's performance results—measures used to track each program's annual progress—generally did not mirror the trends in resource use. Instead, results for programs GAO reviewed were generally stable or improved regardless of the resources applied, and nearly all of the programs that GAO reviewed met their performance targets—the goals they set out to achieve—in fiscal year 2003. Coast Guard officials said that various factors besides resources, such as increased operating efficiencies or unexpected events, also affected performance results, but they have limited information for assessing the impact of these factors. Initial steps have been taken to better develop this capability, but many are in early stages, and the Coast Guard does not have a time frame for completing the work or assurance that they will result in a systematic approach for assessing the results.