



Highlights of [GAO-04-375](#), a report to the Chairman, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs; the Chairman, House Committee on Government Reform, and the Chairman of its Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census

## Why GAO Did This Study

A key information systems challenge in homeland security is ensuring that essential information is shared in a timely and secure manner among disparate parties in federal, state, and local governments, and in the private sectors. This requires communications networks that provide information-sharing capabilities between the various levels of government—federal, state, and local.

GAO's objective was to identify and describe, through agency reporting, major networks and examples of applications that the agencies considered important in supporting their homeland security functions. (For purposes of this review, GAO defined *networks* as “the data communication links that enable computer systems to communicate with each other.”) GAO corroborated agency-provided information about networks used by multiple agencies. While agencies verified the accuracy of the data about their networks, GAO cannot ensure that agencies provided data on all applicable networks.

In commenting on a draft of this report, seven of the nine agencies generally concurred with the facts contained in this report. Technical comments were incorporated as appropriate. Two agencies declined to comment.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-375](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-375).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact David A. Powner at (202) 512-9286 or [pownerd@gao.gov](mailto:pownerd@gao.gov).

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

# Major Federal Networks That Support Homeland Security Functions

## What GAO Found

Nine agencies identified 34 major networks that support homeland security functions—32 that are operational and 2 that are being developed (see table). Of these 34, 21 are single-agency networks designed for internal agency communications. Six of the 34 are used to share information with state and local governments; 4 share information with the private sector.

**Numbers of Major Federal Homeland Security Networks**

	Operational	In development
Unclassified	8	0
Sensitive But Unclassified	17	1
Classified <sup>a</sup>	7 <sup>b</sup>	1 <sup>c</sup>
	32	2

Source: GAO analysis of agency data.

<sup>a</sup>Excludes classified networks that are not publicly acknowledged.

<sup>b</sup>Secret (5), Top Secret (2).

<sup>c</sup>Secret.

The Department of Homeland Security is in the process of developing the new Homeland Secure Data Network. It is intended to become a significant vehicle for the sharing of homeland security information with state and local governments and classified information among civilian agencies.

Agencies also provided examples of more than 100 major applications that support homeland security mission areas. The following table describes 3 of 18 applications that GAO selected to illustrate the range of applications used to support the various homeland security mission areas.

**Three Network Applications That Provide Homeland Security Functions**

Mission area	Application	Responsible department	Network
Intelligence and warning	Modernized Intelligence Data Base	Defense	Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System <sup>a</sup> (Classified/Top Secret)
Border and transportation security	United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT)	Homeland Security	Immigration and Customs Enforcement Network (Sensitive But Unclassified)
Domestic counterterrorism	Patriot Act Communications System	Treasury	Treasury Communications System <sup>a</sup> (Sensitive But Unclassified)

Source: GAO analysis of agency data.

<sup>a</sup>Used by other agencies as well.