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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-161](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The President's annual budget reports on federal funding dedicated to combating terrorism activities. Identification of such funding is inherently difficult because a significant portion of combating terrorism funding is embedded within appropriation accounts that include funding for other activities as well. In 2002, GAO reported on the difficulties that the executive branch faced in reporting funding for combating terrorism to Congress (see GAO-03-170). This report updates the information contained in the 2002 report by providing information on (1) the methods agencies use to determine the portion of their annual appropriations related to combating terrorism, and (2) the status of recommendations from GAO's 2002 report.

What GAO Recommends

GAO continues to believe its prior recommendations are still valid and, if implemented, would provide OMB and Congress with additional insights for budget decisions and help them determine whether funding increases for combating terrorism have improved performance results. In commenting on a draft of the report, OMB objected to the use of overseas combating terrorism funding data because they do not review it. Congress should consider requiring OMB to report on overseas combating terrorism funding data. Other agencies commenting on the draft report had no comment, concurred, or provided technical comments. www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/gettrpt?GAO-06-161.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Paul L. Jones at (202) 512-8777 or jonespl@gao.gov.

COMBATING TERRORISM

Determining and Reporting Federal Funding Data

What GAO Found

Seven of 34 agencies that reported receiving funding related to combating terrorism activities to OMB used different methodologies to estimate the portion of their authorized funding that supports such activities. These 7 agencies account for about 90 percent of the total fiscal year 2006 budget request that the 34 agencies estimate relate to combating terrorism. All of these methods involve some level of professional judgment. Agencies stated this process is managed through OMB oversight and supervisory review. OMB staff said they do not review the overseas component of combating terrorism funding data since they are no longer required to report it. As a result, Congress does not receive OMB-reviewed data on the entirety of counterterrorism funding.

Three recommendations from GAO's 2002 report have not been implemented. The first recommendation requests that OMB include agencies' obligation data in its annual reporting of funding data on combating terrorism. OMB staff continue to cite the effort required to produce such data but said they might consider reporting obligation information for a targeted set of accounts. Without obligation data, it is difficult for Congress to know (1) how much funding from prior years is still available to potentially reduce new spending requests, (2) whether the rate of spending for a program is slower than anticipated, or (3) what the size of the program is for a particular year and over time. The second recommendation was for OMB to direct relevant departments to develop or enhance combating terrorism performance goals and measures and include such measures in the governmentwide plan. Three of the seven agencies told us that OMB had not directed them to develop performance measures or enhance such measures for combating terrorism activities. However, four of the seven agencies had developed such measures. OMB staff said they are working with agencies to improve performance measurement of government programs related to combating terrorism. The development of such measures would assist Congress in determining whether funding increases have improved performance results. The third recommendation calls for the inclusion of national-level and federal governmentwide combating terrorism performance measures in supplements to existing strategies and their future revisions. There have been no supplements or revisions to the existing strategies that include governmentwide or national-level combating terrorism measures.



Source: United States Coast Guard.

Coast Guard activities include combating terrorism (at left, Fourth of July security patrol off New York City) and those unrelated to terrorism (at right, an ice tugboat breaks ice to facilitate navigation through waterways).