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HOMELAND SECURITY

Observations on the
National Strategies Related
to Terrorism

Statement of Norman J. Rabkin,
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this committee to address national strategies related to homeland security.

We at GAO applaud the efforts of the 9/11 Commission and the dedicated family members of the victims of that tragic day whose combined efforts have resulted in a definitive account of the past events and 41 recommendations for the future. As the Commission notes, we are safer today but we are not safe, and much work remains. We concur with the Commission's conclusion that the American people should expect their government to do its very best. We also acknowledge the efforts of earlier congressionally chartered commissions—the Bremer, Gilmore, and Hart-Rudman Commissions—that also analyzed terrorist incidents and government programs and made recommendations to improve homeland security.

In an effort to increase homeland security following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, the executive branch issued seven national strategies related to combating terrorism and homeland security. Per your request, this testimony will focus primarily on the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* but also include relevant aspects of the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. Together, these two national strategies address preventing terrorist attacks within the United States, reducing America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimizing the damage and assisting in the recovery from future attacks, if they occur.

In my testimony today, I will cover three topics.

- To what extent are elements of the *Homeland Security and Combating Terrorism* strategies aligned with recommendations issued by the 9/11 Commission?
- What key departments have responsibilities for implementing the *Homeland Security* strategy, and what actions have they taken to implement the strategy?
- What challenges are faced by key departments in assessing their progress towards achieving homeland security objectives?

This testimony continues GAO's efforts to establish baseline assessments related to homeland security. In February, we testified on the desired

characteristics of national strategies, and whether various strategies—including the *Homeland Security* and *Combating Terrorism* strategies—contained those desired characteristics.¹ In March, we summarized strategic homeland security recommendations by GAO and congressionally chartered commissions that preceded the 9/11 Commission in issuing their reports.² We organized this March analysis by critical mission area, as defined in the *Homeland Security* strategy. In July, we reported on GAO recommendations to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the department’s progress in implementing such recommendations.³ We organized this July analysis by DHS directorate or division. Together, these baseline efforts are intended to aid congressional oversight in assessing the effectiveness of federal homeland security activities.

Summary

The 9/11 Commission issued 8 recommendations that were not addressed in the specific initiatives for the critical mission areas of the *Homeland Security* strategy or the goals and objectives of the *Combating Terrorism* strategy. These recommendations pertain to enhancing analytical capabilities of the Central Intelligence Agency, reorganizing the intelligence community, improving accountability of intelligence operations, leadership of the Department of Defense in paramilitary operations, continuity of national security policymaking, and modifying congressional oversight. As the national strategies are expected to evolve over time, they could reflect some of these recommendations. The remaining 33 Commission recommendations are aligned with the specific initiatives of the *Homeland Security* strategy or the objectives of the *Combating Terrorism* strategy. For example, in the area of Defending Against Catastrophic Threats, the Commission recommended that the United States prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by expanding and supporting existing counterproliferation initiatives. Similarly, the *Homeland Security* strategy includes an initiative to prevent terrorist use of nuclear weapons. The 9/11 Commission also recommended that the United States engage with other nations in developing a strategy

¹ GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, [GAO-04-408T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004).

² GAO, *Homeland Security: Selected Recommendations from Congressionally Chartered Commissions and GAO*, [GAO-04-591](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 31, 2004).

³ GAO, *Status of Key Recommendations GAO Has Made to DHS and Its Legacy Agencies*, [GAO-04-865R](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2004).

against terrorism and an approach toward detention and humane treatment of captured terrorists. Likewise, the *Combating Terrorism* strategy includes an objective to establish and maintain an international standard and accountability with regard to combating terrorism.

Our preliminary analysis identifies six departments—the Departments of Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, and State—as having key roles in implementing the *Homeland Security* strategy. These six departments represent 94 percent of the proposed \$47 billion budget for homeland security in fiscal year 2005. In addition, our preliminary analysis shows that these six departments have lead agency roles in implementing the *Homeland Security* strategy. For example, DHS was designated as the lead agency for 37 of the 43 initiatives in that strategy. According to information received from agency officials, at least one of these six departments has demonstrated planning and/or implementation activities in each of the 43 initiatives. While our preliminary analysis indicates that planning or implementation activities were occurring, it was not within the scope of the analysis to assess the status or quality of the various departments’ activities on each initiative. In a forthcoming report for this committee, we will provide more detailed information on these departments’ efforts, including an analysis of lead agencies’ current implementation activities.

As key departments continue to implement the *Homeland Security* strategy, the development of performance goals and measures will help them assess their progress in implementing homeland security efforts. Once they are established, performance measures, such as cost-effectiveness and net benefits, can be used to link costs to outcomes. Development of standards, particularly systems and service standards, will also provide an important means to measure preparedness and guide resource investments.

Background

Terrorism is generally defined as politically motivated violence to coerce a government or civilian population. The term “combating terrorism” generally refers to the full range of policies, strategies, programs, and activities to counter terrorism both at home and abroad. The distinction between “homeland security” and “combating terrorism overseas” is that

federal efforts on homeland security have a domestic focus whereas combating terrorism overseas efforts have an international focus.⁴

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush issued several national strategies related to homeland security and combating terrorism. These included the *National Strategy for Homeland Security (July 2002)*, the *National Money Laundering Strategy (July 2002)*, the *National Security Strategy (September 2002)*, the *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction (December 2002)*, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (February 2003)*, the *National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets (February 2003)*, and the *National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace (February 2003)*.⁵ This testimony focuses on the *Homeland Security* and *Combating Terrorism* strategies.

The National Strategy for Homeland Security

The *Homeland Security* strategy, with a domestic focus, sets out a plan to organize federal, state, local, and private sector organizations, on an array of functions. The strategy organizes these functions into six critical “mission areas”:⁶

- Intelligence and Warning (which involves the collection, analysis, and distribution of information appropriate for preempting or preventing a terrorist attack).
- Border and Transportation Security (which emphasizes the efficient and reliable flow of people, goods, and services across borders, while deterring terrorist activity).

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the definition of terrorism and related terms, see GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Interagency Framework and Agency Programs to Address the Overseas Threat*, [GAO-03-165](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2003), pp. 12-15.

⁵ For our detailed analysis of all of these strategies, see GAO, *Combating Terrorism, Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, [GAO-04-408T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004).

⁶ The strategy also includes a discussion of “foundations” which we did not identify separately in our analysis. The strategy describes these foundations as unique American strengths that cut across all sectors of society, such as law, science and technology, information sharing and systems, and international cooperation. The discussion of these foundations overlaps with the six mission areas. For example, improving international shipping security is covered by the mission area of border and transportation security as well as the foundation area of international cooperation.

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- Domestic Counterterrorism (which focuses on law enforcement efforts to identify, halt, prevent, and prosecute terrorists in the United States.).
 - Protecting Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets (which stresses securing the nation’s individual pieces and interconnecting systems that, if disrupted, may cause significant damage to the nation).
 - Defending Against Catastrophic Threats (which emphasizes the detection, deterrence, and mitigation of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction).
 - Emergency Preparedness and Response (which focuses on damage minimization and recovery from terrorist attacks).

The *Homeland Security* strategy also identifies “major initiatives” to be addressed within each of these six mission areas. For example, within the Intelligence and Warning critical mission area, five major initiatives are indicated: (1) enhancing the analytic capabilities of the FBI; (2) building new capabilities through the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Division of the proposed DHS; (3) implementing the Homeland Security Advisory System; (4) utilizing dual-use analysis to prevent attacks; and (5) employing “red team” techniques.⁷ In all, the strategy cites 43 major initiatives across the 6 critical mission areas.

Since the *Homeland Security* strategy was issued in July 2002, the President has also released 12 Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPDs) that provide additional guidance related to these mission areas. For example, HSPD-4 focuses on defending against catastrophic threats, and HSPD-7 focuses on protecting critical infrastructure.

The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism

The *Combating Terrorism* strategy, with an overseas focus, emphasizes identifying and defusing threats before they reach the borders of the United States. This strategy calls for fighting terrorist organizations of global reach and reducing their scope and capabilities to the regional and then local levels. The goal is to reduce the scope of terrorism to make it more localized, unorganized, and relegated to the criminal domain. The strategy seeks to accomplish this through four goals and 15 subordinate objectives. Together, these goals comprise the “4D Strategy:”

⁷ Red-team techniques are those where the U.S. government would create a team that plays the role of terrorists in terms of identifying vulnerabilities and planning attacks.

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- Defeat terrorist organizations of global reach by attacking their sanctuaries; leadership command, control, and communications; material support; and finances.
 - Deny further sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorist by ensuring that other states accept their responsibilities to take actions against these international threats within their sovereign territory.
 - Diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit by enlisting the international community to focus its efforts and resources on the areas most at risk.
 - Defend the United States, its citizens, and its interests at home and abroad by both proactively protecting the homeland and extending defenses to identify and neutralize the threat as early as possible.

Congressionally Chartered Commissions

Congress, because of concerns about terrorism in recent years, chartered four commissions to examine terrorist threats and the government's response to such threats, as well as to make recommendations to federal, state, local, and private organizations. These commissions included:

- The Bremer Commission (the National Commission on Terrorism, chaired by Ambassador Paul Bremer), which issued its report in June 2000.
- The Gilmore Commission (the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, chaired by Governor James S. Gilmore, III), which issued its final report in December 2003.
- The Hart-Rudman Commission (the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, chaired by Senators Gary Hart and Warren B. Rudman), which issued its final report in February 2001.
- The 9/11 Commission (the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, chaired by Governor Thomas H. Kean), which issued its final report in July 2004.

The 9/11 Commission was established by Congress on November 27, 2002, to (1) investigate the relevant facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; (2) identify, review, and evaluate lessons learned from these attacks; and (3) report to the President and Congress on findings, conclusions, and recommendations that generate from the investigation and review. The Commission's investigations were

to focus on intelligence agencies; law enforcement agencies; diplomacy; immigration, nonimmigrant visas, and border control; the flow of assets to terrorist organizations; commercial aviation; the role of congressional oversight and resource allocation; and other areas of the public and private sectors determined to be relevant by the Commission for its inquiry. As a result of its work, the 9/11 Commission issued a report on July 22, 2004, which included 41 primary recommendations⁸ for improvements in the United States' approach to securing the homeland and combating terrorism.

Of the 41 recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission, 30 are strategic in the sense that they are broad in focus and implementation would require coordination across multiple departments, levels of government, and sectors. Examples of such recommendations are tracking terrorist financing and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In contrast, 8 recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission are agency-specific and could be addressed in a single agency's implementation plan. The departments and agencies targeted by these recommendations are DHS, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). For example, the Commission recommended that DOD and its oversight committees regularly assess the adequacy of Northern Command's strategies and planning and that the FBI should establish a specialized and integrated national security workforce. The remaining 3 recommendations are foreign-country-specific. For example, the 9/11 Commission recommended that the U.S. support Pakistan's government in its struggle against extremists, with a comprehensive effort that extends from military aid to support for better education. While some of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations are specific to an individual agency, department, or foreign country, the national strategies guide agencies in their implementation of homeland security efforts, whether these efforts are collaborative or individual, broad or specific. Therefore, we have included all of the Commission's recommendations in our comparative analysis with the national strategies.

⁸ We define "primary recommendations" as those recommendations that were highlighted in bold and specifically identified as a recommendation in the 9/11 Commission report.

Scope and Methodology

To determine the extent to which the 9/11 Commission recommendations are aligned with the national strategies, we took a number of steps. We looked at each of the primary 9/11 Commission recommendations in the context of one or more of the six mission areas of the *Homeland Security* strategy. Then, to the extent appropriate, we matched each recommendation with one or more of the major initiatives for each mission area. For those recommendations that were not associated with any of the mission areas, we determined the extent to which these recommendations were covered in the objectives of the *Combating Terrorism* strategy. Our detailed analysis first focused on the *Homeland Security* strategy because it is more comprehensive in describing its purpose, scope, and objectives than the *Combating Terrorism* strategy.

To determine what key departments have implementation responsibilities for the *Homeland Security* strategy, we examined the latest available homeland security funding data for federal agencies. We then selected the six departments with the largest proposed homeland security budgets—DHS, DOD, the Department of Energy (Energy), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of State (State)—which together account for 94 percent of the President’s proposed \$47 billion budget for homeland security in fiscal year 2005. Additionally, we reviewed the language in the *Homeland Security* strategy and HSPDs to determine whether these departments had been designated as “lead agencies” in implementing the initiatives. We then determined whether the six key federal departments addressed these 43 strategy initiatives in their planning and implementation activity by conducting a review of each department’s high-level strategic planning documents related to homeland security. As part of this analysis, we determined whether each department was specifically engaged in conducting planning and implementation activities related to each of the 43 initiatives. We provided the results of our analyses to officials from the various departments for their verification. Departments provided the data during fiscal year 2004; however, we did not conduct our own audit to verify the accuracy of the data or the progress of particular activities. Nor did we assess the status, extent or quality of the work being planned or implemented, as it was not in the scope of our engagement. We further recognize that the departments may continue to plan and implement at least some of their strategies and programs through the remainder of fiscal year 2004, resulting in a change in findings over time.

To determine the challenges faced by key departments in measuring progress in implementing homeland security efforts, we reviewed and

summarized our products related to strategic planning and performance measurement.

We conducted our work between February and September 2004 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

The National Strategies Are Generally Aligned with the 9/11 Commission Recommendations

While we would not expect to see a direct correlation between the national strategies' objectives and the 9/11 Commission recommendations, it is nevertheless helpful to examine them side-by-side, to ascertain whether there is some alignment.

Although the Commission's recommendations are broadly aligned with the two strategies, 8 of the 41 recommendations are not addressed in the specific initiatives of the critical mission areas of the *Homeland Security* strategy or the objectives of the *Combating Terrorism* strategy. For example, the 9/11 Commission recommendations suggest enhancing the analytical capabilities of the CIA and reorganizing the intelligence community— initiatives that are not identified in either strategy.⁹ Table 1 lists these 8 recommendations.

⁹ In August 2004, the President issued a series of executive orders related to the management of the intelligence community and sharing terrorist information. We have not evaluated the extent to which these orders address the 9/11 Commission recommendations.

Table 1: 9/11 Commission Recommendations that are Not Addressed in the Mission Area Initiatives of the National Strategy for Homeland Security or the Objectives of the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism

“The CIA Director should emphasize (a) rebuilding the CIA’s analytic capabilities; (b) transforming the clandestine service by building its human intelligence capabilities; (c) developing a stronger language program, with high standards and sufficient financial incentives; (d) renewing emphasis on recruiting diversity among operations officers so they can blend more easily in foreign cities; (e) ensuring a seamless relationship between human source collection and signals collection at the operational level; and (f) stressing a better balance between unilateral and liaison operations.”

“We recommend the establishment of a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), built on the foundation of the existing Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC). Breaking the older mold of national government organization, this NCTC should be a center for joint operational planning and joint intelligence, staffed by personnel from the various agencies. The head of the NCTC should have authority to evaluate the performance of the people assigned to the Center.”

“The current position of Director of Central Intelligence should be replaced by a National Intelligence Director with two main areas of responsibility: (1) to oversee national intelligence centers on specific subjects of interest across the U.S. government and (2) to manage the national intelligence program and oversee the agencies that contribute to it.”

“Finally, to combat the secrecy and complexity we have described, the overall amounts of money being appropriated for national intelligence and to its component agencies should no longer be kept secret. Congress should pass a separate appropriations act for intelligence, defining the broad allocation of how these tens of billions of dollars have been assigned among the varieties of intelligence work.”

“Lead responsibility for directing and executing paramilitary operations, whether clandestine or covert, should shift to the Defense Department. There it should be consolidated with the capabilities for training, direction, and execution of such operations already being developed in the Special Operations Command.”

“Since a catastrophic attack could occur with little or no notice, we should minimize as much as possible the disruption of national security policymaking during the change of administrations by accelerating the process for national security appointments. We think the process could be improved significantly so transitions can work more effectively and allow new officials to assume their new responsibilities as quickly as possible.”

“Congress should create a single principal point of oversight and review for homeland security. Congressional leaders are best able to judge what committee should have jurisdiction over this department and its duties. But we believe that Congress does have the obligation to choose one in the House and one in the Senate, and that this committee should be a permanent standing committee with nonpartisan staff.”

“Congressional oversight for intelligence – and counterterrorism – is now dysfunctional. Congress should address this problem. We have considered various alternatives: A joint committee on the old model of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy is one. A single committee in each house of Congress, combining authorization and appropriating authorities, is another.”

Source: GAO analysis of the 9/11 Commission recommendations.

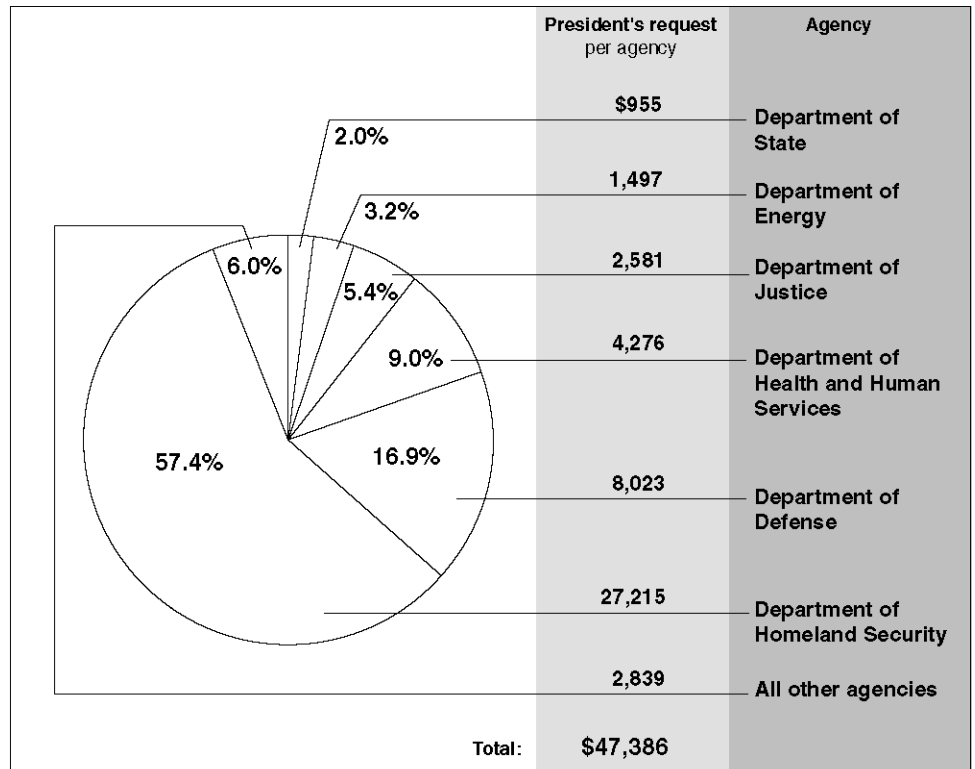
Of the remaining 33 initiatives, 22 are aligned with at least one initiative related to the critical mission areas of the *Homeland Security* strategy and 11 were aligned with at least one of the objectives of the *Combating Terrorism* strategy. For example, the 9/11 Commission recommended that a specialized and integrated national security workforce be established at the FBI in order to enhance the agency's expertise in intelligence and national security. Similarly, the *Homeland Security* strategy includes initiatives regarding the restructuring and enhanced capabilities of the FBI. The 9/11 Commission also recommended that the United States provide economic and development support to Muslim nations to help prevent the use of these nations as terrorist sanctuaries. Likewise, one of the objectives of the *Combating Terrorism* strategy is to strengthen weak states and prevent the emergence or reemergence of terrorism.

While the *Homeland Security* and *Combating Terrorism* strategies are aligned with the vast majority of recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission, the additional recommendations may be considered in future updates of the national strategies.

Preliminary Results Indicate Key Federal Departments Have Initiated Planning and Implementation of Homeland Security Strategy Initiatives

We identified six departments—DOD, Energy, HHS, DHS, DOJ, and State—as having key roles in implementing the *Homeland Security* strategy. As shown in figure 1, these six departments have the highest level of funding and together comprise 94 percent of the proposed \$47 billion budget for homeland security in fiscal year 2005. While not shown in figure 1, these departments also dominate funding for most of the individual homeland security mission areas. For example, DHS features prominently across all critical mission areas, representing the majority of funding requested in intelligence and warning, border and transportation security, and emergency preparedness and response, as well as substantial portions of the budget submissions for domestic counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, and catastrophic threat defense. Similarly, three of these departments comprise the majority of funding requested in three mission areas, respectively – DOJ in domestic counterterrorism, DOD in critical infrastructure protection, and HHS in catastrophic threat defense.

Figure 1. Proposed Fiscal Year 2005 Homeland Security Funding by Federal Department (budget authority in millions of dollars)



Source: GAO, based on OMB, Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2005.

Note: Other agencies includes the Departments of Agriculture (\$651 million), Veterans Affairs (\$297 million), Transportation (\$243 million), Commerce (\$150 million), and Treasury (\$87 million), as well as the National Science Foundation (\$344 million), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (\$207 million), Social Security Administration (\$155 million), Environmental Protection Agency (\$97 million), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (\$84 million), General Services Administration (\$80 million), and several smaller agencies.

Our preliminary analysis of these six departments reinforced their position as key players because they have lead agency roles in implementing the *Homeland Security* strategy. Specifically, the strategy and HSPDs designate the six departments as lead agencies for particular initiatives (or functions within the initiatives). DHS was clearly the most important department for implementation because it was designated as a lead agency for 37 of the 43 initiatives in the *Homeland Security* strategy. The other 5 departments were also designated as a lead as follows—DOJ (a lead on 9

initiatives); HHS and State (each a lead on 5 initiatives); DOD (a lead on 4 initiatives); and Energy (a lead on 3 initiatives).

While we consider the designation of lead agencies as a positive step in establishing accountability, 14 of the 43 initiatives have multiple lead agencies. This indicates that interagency coordination of roles and activities will be important, particularly on those initiatives involving multiple leads (e.g., domestic counterterrorism and critical infrastructure protection).

Based on our preliminary analysis, it appears that the six key departments have incorporated the *Homeland Security* strategy's initiatives in their strategic planning and implementation activities. Our initial analysis shows that all 43 of the strategy's initiatives were included in some of the activities implemented by the six departments; however, we have not assessed the status, extent, or quality of the various departments' activities on each initiative, as it was not in the scope of our review. All five Intelligence and Warning initiatives have been covered by at least one department in each of the initiatives. There are six initiatives under the Border and Transportation Security mission area, each addressed by at least two departments' planning or implementation activities. Domestic Counterterrorism has six initiatives, each of which are covered by at least one department's planning or implementation activities. The strategy identifies eight initiatives under the Protecting Critical Infrastructures and Key Assets mission area, in which each of the initiatives are addressed by at least four departments. There are six initiatives under the Defending Against Catastrophic Threats mission area; all of the initiatives feature planning or implementation activities by at least two departments. For the Emergency Preparedness and Response mission area, the strategy identifies 12 initiatives with coverage of each initiative by at least one department's activities. In a forthcoming report for this committee, we will provide more detailed information on these departments' efforts, including an analysis of current implementation activities.

Development of Performance Goals and Measures May Assist Key Agencies in Assessing Progress Towards Implementing Homeland Security Efforts

Developing clear performance measures and standards for implementing the *Homeland Security* strategy is important for agencies to assess their progress in achieving their mission-related goals and objectives. However, as we stated in an earlier testimony, the strategy's initiatives often do not provide a baseline set of performance goals and measures upon which to assess and improve preparedness.¹⁰ Thus, is it a challenge for the nation to ensure both a successful and a fiscally responsible preparedness effort.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) required federal agencies to develop strategic plans with long-term, outcome-oriented goals and objectives, annual goals linked to achieving the long-term goals, and annual reports on the results achieved.

We identified strategic planning as one of the critical success factors for new organizations.¹¹ For example, as part of its implementation phase, we noted that DHS should engage in strategic planning through the involvement of stakeholders, assessment of internal and external environments, and an alignment of activities, core processes, and resources to support mission-related outcomes. We are currently reviewing DHS's first strategic plan to, among other things, assess the extent to which it reflects GPRA requirements and supports the *Homeland Security* strategy.

Additionally, we have reported that expanding agency use of performance measures that link costs to outcomes is important. However, we have found that agencies are generally weak on linking costs to performance, whether through measures such as cost-effectiveness, net benefits, or others. Such measures are broadly required for planning regulatory and investment decisions but are seldom used to evaluate actual performance, even though the planning documents can sometimes provide a basis to compare forecasts and actual outcomes.¹² The Congressional Committee report on the establishment of GPRA devoted considerable attention on links between performance and cost.

¹⁰ GAO, *Homeland Security: Effective Intergovernmental Coordination is Key to Success*, GAO-02-1011T (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 2002).

¹¹ GAO, *Homeland Security: Critical Design and Implementation Issues*, GAO-02-957T (Washington, D.C.: July 17, 2002).

¹² For example, OMB Circulars A-11 and A-94.

To find an example of the need for baseline performance goals and measures we need look no further than the nation's efforts at emergency preparedness and response. We have reported that there is not yet a comprehensive set of preparedness standards for measuring first responder capacities, identifying gaps in those capacities, and measuring progress in achieving performance goals. Additionally, in our past work on bioterrorism preparedness,¹³ we reported that state and local officials were concerned about the lack of specific standards for measuring preparedness, and these officials noted that specific benchmarks would help them determine whether they were adequately prepared to respond to a bioterrorism incident. Moreover, in our past work on interoperable communications,¹⁴ we discussed the need to establish national interoperability performance goals and standards. Finally, we have reported on the lack of reliable information on existing federal, state, and local capabilities for combating terrorism and the need to develop a comprehensive inventory of existing capabilities. Without standards linked to such capabilities, it will be a challenge to assess preparedness gaps and efforts to address the gaps.¹⁵

Since homeland security relies upon the coordinated actions of federal, state, local governments, and the private sector—and, in many cases, upon “layers” of defenses—a challenge exists in measuring progress across numerous dimensions. Systems and services standards—which focus on the performance, design, and overall management of processes and activities—hold great potential to both improve coordination across such dimensions and enhance measurement of continued preparedness. Such standards could assist in overcoming challenges in identifying interdependencies, defining roles and relationships, assigning responsibilities, and linking federal, state, and local governments, and the private sector in a measurable, dependable, and reliable manner. The private sector already sets standards within various business chains, such

¹³ GAO, *Bioterrorism: Preparedness Varied across State and Local Jurisdictions*, [GAO-03-373](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 7, 2003).

¹⁴ GAO, *Homeland Security: Federal Leadership and Intergovernmental Cooperation Required to Achieve First Responder Interoperable Communications*, [GAO-04-963T](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 20, 2004) and *Homeland Security: Challenges in Achieving Interoperable Communications for First Responders*, [GAO-04-231T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 6, 2003).

¹⁵ GAO, *Homeland Security: Coordinated Planning and Standards Needed to Better Manage First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region*, [GAO-04-904T](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2004).

as in the design, raw materials, supply, manufacture, sales, delivery, and customer support chain. Within homeland security process chains, standards will be essential to overcome the challenge of assuring the stability and reliability of all links in the interdependent business chains of all involved parties responsible for homeland security.

Standards can also aid in identifying and fixing fragile links that could lead to particularly catastrophic cascading events, such as widespread power outages or domino effect impacts on food supply or product distribution systems. Systems, services, and management standards can also help clarify the important roles each organization, level of government, and public or private sector plays in improving homeland security. Standards will factor in costs, legal, jurisdictional and other constraints, and identify ways to imbed homeland security principles into business and government systems in ways compatible with other important social and economic goals. Standards will also enable more effective oversight by providing means to measure preparedness and guide resource investments.¹⁶

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. We look forward to providing you with a more detailed report on department plans, activities and challenges regarding the implementation of the *Homeland Security* strategy. I will now be pleased to respond to any questions that you or other members of the committee have.

GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgements

For further information about this testimony, please contact Norman J. Rabkin at 202-512-8777. Other key contributors to this statement were Stephen L. Caldwell, Kristy N. Brown, Jared Hermalin, Wayne A. Ekblad, Ricardo Marquez, and Amy Bernstein.

¹⁶ GAO, *Homeland Security: The Need for National Standards*, Statement of Randall Yim, Managing Director, National Preparedness, Homeland Security and Justice, before The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. (Washington, D.C.: November 19, 2003).

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