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**Highlights**

Highlights of GAO-04-408T, testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration developed and published seven national strategies that relate, in part or in whole, to combating terrorism and homeland security. These were the:

- *National Security Strategy of the United States of America.*
- *National Strategy for Homeland Security.*
- *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.*
- *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction.*
- *National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets.*
- *National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace.*
- *2002 National Money Laundering Strategy.*

In view of heightened concerns about terrorism and homeland security, GAO was asked to identify and define the desirable characteristics of an effective national strategy and to evaluate whether the national strategies related to terrorism address those characteristics. The purpose of this testimony is to report on GAO's findings on this matter.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-408T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-408T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randall A. Yim at (202) 512-6787 or YimR@gao.gov.

## COMBATING TERRORISM

### Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism

#### What GAO Found

National strategies are not required by either executive or legislative mandate to address a single, consistent set of characteristics. However, based on a review of numerous sources, GAO identified a set of desirable characteristics to aid responsible parties in further developing and implementing the strategies—and to enhance their usefulness in resource and policy decisions and to better assure accountability. The characteristics GAO identified are: (1) purpose, scope, and methodology; (2) problem definition and risk assessment; (3) goals, subordinate objectives, activities, and performance measures; (4) resources, investments, and risk management; (5) organizational roles, responsibilities, and coordination; and (6) integration and implementation.

GAO found considerable variation in the extent to which the seven strategies related to combating terrorism and homeland security address the desirable characteristics. A majority of the strategies at least partially address the six characteristics. However, none of the strategies addresses all of the elements of resources, investments, and risk management; or integration and implementation. Even where the characteristics are addressed, improvements could be made. For example, while the strategies identify goals, subordinate objectives, and specific activities, they generally do not discuss or identify priorities, milestones, or performance measures—elements that are desirable for evaluating progress and ensuring effective oversight. On the whole, the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* and the *National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets* address the greatest number of desirable characteristics, while the *National Security Strategy* and the *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* address the fewest.

**The Pentagon in Flames Moments after International Terrorists Crash a Hijacked Aircraft into the Building on September 11, 2001**



Source: U.S. Marine Corps.