



Highlights of [GAO-03-260](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

To understand the federal government's response since the September 11 terrorist attacks, GAO was asked to review governmentwide changes and challenges prevalent in the missions and activities of agencies involved in homeland security, including the coordination and collaboration required to meet overall goals and needs, and government's efforts in planning and implementing strategic, transitional, and human capital activities designed to reorganize and strengthen homeland security.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that

- OHS, with OMB and DHS, guide development of performance measures and time frames, and clarify the roles of all parties to establish accountability;
- OMB develop an effective transition plan for DHS, including practices identified in GAO's Mergers and Transformation Forum and other key success factors;
- OMB, with DHS, ensure the implementation of broad based management practices and principles that will improve the sustainability of DHS; and
- OPM, with OMB, develop and oversee the implementation of a long-term human capital strategy for homeland security activities.

OHS had no comments. OMB staff provided technical comments. OPM agreed with our recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-260](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-260)

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Patricia A. Dalton (202) 512-6806 or [daltonp@gao.gov](mailto:daltonp@gao.gov).

# HOMELAND SECURITY

## Management Challenges Facing Federal Leadership

### What GAO Found

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the federal government has invigorated the homeland security missions of many departments and agencies, nearly doubled the amount of federal funds devoted to homeland security, enacted new legislation to create a new department and strengthen transportation security and law enforcement activities, leveraged relationships with state and local governments and the private sector, and begun to establish a framework for planning the national strategy and the transition required for implementing the new Department of Homeland Security and other homeland security goals. Overall, the federal government's response on homeland security issues is still evolving.

- **A new homeland security emphasis is under way, but remains incomplete.** Agencies reported a new emphasis on homeland security activities, such as accelerated implementation of existing homeland security activities or increased coordination with other government agencies or the private sector. Agencies will be challenged in meeting dual or unrelated missions while maintaining and strengthening homeland security operations. Government organizational changes are also contributing to the new emphasis, including creation of the Office of Homeland Security, the Transportation Security Administration, and the integration of many homeland security functions into the new Department of Homeland Security. Although officials say that coordination efforts at all levels have increased, concerns remain particularly with state and local government and collaboration with the private sector needs greater emphasis.
- **The federal government's efforts to improve homeland security will require a results-oriented approach to ensure mission accountability and sustainability over time.** Efforts to strengthen homeland security will require a strategy to accomplish agencies' missions, to create an effective transition for DHS, and to leverage management practices and key success factors in order to merge and transform the new department. In recognizing the value of a national strategy, OHS, DHS, and others should not expect that all of the homeland security objectives can be achieved simultaneously. As a result, it will be important for these agencies to focus initially on the most critical issues and greatest risks, and to guide the strategy's implementation in phases. Strategic planning efforts and comprehensive risk analysis activities have been started, but remain incomplete. Agencies with homeland security missions and the new department need an integrated human capital strategy, and the development of a performance management system and utilization of personnel flexibilities can improve organizations' effectiveness. DHS transition planning has started, but will require sustained efforts, including attention to management practices and key success factors.