



Highlights of [GAO-08-887SP](#), a GAO forum

Why GAO Convened This Forum

The United States and the international community have stressed that a coordinated response is required to address the global threat from transnational terrorism. Multilateral engagements provide opportunities to foster relationships with traditional and nontraditional partner countries. Partnerships also can raise common awareness of the threat and build the trust necessary to share information that could prevent and detect terrorist acts.

GAO convened a forum on April 22, 2008, to advance the dialogue on how partnerships can mitigate the conditions that foster transnational terrorism and to identify potential strategies for overcoming challenges faced in engaging in such partnerships. Participants included representatives from U.S. government agencies, foreign embassies, nongovernmental and multilateral organizations, policy institutes, the private sector, and academia.

The forum focused on (1) the partnership efforts and key practices of the U.S. government and its partners, (2) challenges to these efforts and practices, and (3) strategies to overcome the challenges. Comments expressed during the proceedings do not necessarily represent the views of all participants, the organizations they represent, or GAO. Participants reviewed a draft of this summary, and their comments were incorporated, as appropriate.

To view the full product, click on [GAO-08-887SP](#). For more information, contact Charles M. Johnson Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

HIGHLIGHTS OF A FORUM

Enhancing U.S. Partnerships in Countering Transnational Terrorism

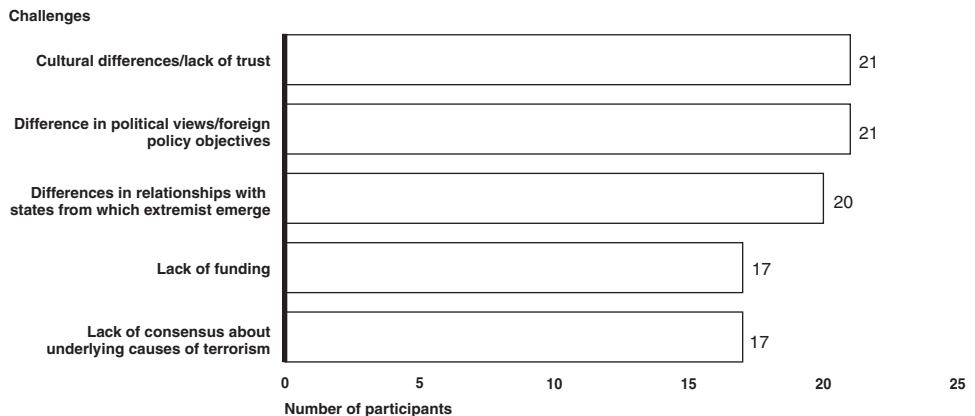
What Participants Said

Forum participants discussed the types of partnerships or initiatives they have engaged in to counter the enabling environment that fosters transnational terrorism. Some of the partnership activities that participants cited include information sharing, training and capacity building, dialogue and education on counterterrorism, and conducting on-the-ground assessments. A few participants voiced concerns that certain labels for partnership programs could limit program effectiveness. Some participants also described characteristics of effective partnerships, such as shared objectives and common understanding of terminology.

Participants identified and ranked the challenges they currently face or have perceived in their partnerships to combat transnational terrorism. The top five challenges were (1) cultural differences and lack of trust, (2) differences in political views/foreign policy objectives, (3) differences in relationships with states from which extremists emerge, (4) lack of funding, and (5) lack of consensus about the underlying causes of terrorism (see figure).

Participants discussed strategies for overcoming some of the challenges. A few participants suggested that funding for counterterrorism programs and activities be made more flexible, so that it could be allocated where needed and have the most impact. Some participants indicated it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of extremist ideologies and the underlying causes of terrorism before making decisions about funding. A few participants also mentioned that knowledge and “practical capacity” in countering terrorism need to be integrated, so that the United States and its partners can gain a better understanding of extremism and current adversaries.

Top Five Counterterrorism Partnership Challenges Identified by Participants



Source: GAO analysis of participants’ forum responses.

Note: We asked 22 participants to identify the extent to which they faced or perceived each of the key challenges above. The figure indicates the number of participants who reported facing these challenges to a very great, great, or moderate extent. The number of responses to each challenge ranged from 20 to 22.