



Highlights of [GAO-07-309](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In November 2005, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established the Secure Border Initiative (SBI) program to secure U.S. borders and reduce illegal immigration. One element of SBI is *SBI_{net}*, the program responsible for developing a comprehensive border protection system. By legislative mandate, DHS developed a fiscal year 2007 expenditure plan for *SBI_{net}* to address nine legislative conditions, including a review by GAO. DHS submitted the plan to the Appropriations Committees on December 4, 2006. To address the mandate, GAO assessed the plan against federal guidelines and industry standards and interviewed appropriate DHS officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS (1) ensure that future expenditure plans include explicit and measurable commitments relative to the capabilities, schedule, costs, and benefits associated with individual *SBI_{net}* program activities; (2) modify the *SBI_{net}* contract to include a maximum quantity or dollar value; and (3) re-examine the level of concurrency and appropriately adjust the acquisition strategy. DHS concurred with the first and third recommendations, but not the second. DHS stated that the contract already contains a maximum quantity. GAO disagrees and believes DHS needs to modify the contract to ensure compliance with regulations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-309.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Richard M. Stana at (202) 512-8816 or stanar@gao.gov.

SECURE BORDER INITIATIVE

SBI_{net} Expenditure Plan Needs to Better Support Oversight and Accountability

What GAO Found

The *SBI_{net}* expenditure plan, including related documentation and program officials' statements, satisfied four legislative conditions, partially satisfied four legislative conditions, and did not satisfy one legislative condition. The nine legislative conditions and the level of satisfaction are summarized in the table.

Satisfaction of Legislative Conditions

Legislative condition	Status
1. Defines activities, milestones, and costs for implementing the program	Partially satisfied
2. Demonstrates how activities will further the goals and objectives of the Secure Border Initiative, as defined in the SBI multi-year strategic plan	Not satisfied
3. Identifies funding and the organization staffing (including full-time equivalents, contractors, and detailees) requirements by activity	Satisfied
4. Reports on costs incurred, the activities completed, and the progress made by the program in terms of obtaining operational control of the entire border of the United States	Partially satisfied
5. Includes a certification by DHS's Chief Procurement Officer that procedures to prevent conflicts of interest between the prime integrator and major subcontractors are established and a certification by DHS's Chief Information Officer that an independent verification and validation agent is currently under contract for the project	Satisfied
6. Complies with all applicable acquisition rules, requirements, guidelines, and best systems acquisition management practices of the federal government	Partially satisfied
7. Complies with the capital planning and investment control review requirements established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), including Circular A-11, part 7	Partially satisfied
8. Is reviewed and approved by DHS's Investment Review Board, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and OMB	Satisfied
9. Is reviewed by GAO	Satisfied

Source: GAO analysis of DHS data.

Satisfying the legislative conditions is important because the expenditure plan is intended to provide Congress with the information needed to effectively oversee the program and hold DHS accountable for program results. Satisfying the legislative conditions is also important to minimize the program's exposure to cost, schedule, and performance risks. *SBI_{net}*'s December 2006 expenditure plan offered a high-level and partial outline of a large and complex program that forms an integral component of a broader multiyear initiative. However, the plan and related documentation did not include explicit and measurable commitments relative to capabilities, schedule, costs, and benefits associated with individual *SBI_{net}* program activities. In addition, the *SBI_{net}* systems integration contract did not contain a specific number of units that may be ordered or a maximum dollar value as required by Federal Acquisition Regulation. Further, DHS's approach to *SBI_{net}* introduces additional risk because the program's schedule entails a high level of concurrency among related planned tasks and activities.