

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-603](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Committee reports accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013, directed DHS to undertake an in-depth review of the department's weapons of mass destruction programs, including potential consolidation of CBRNE mission functions. DHS conducted its review, and in June 2015 provided a report to Congress, including a proposal to consolidate the agency's core CBRNE functions. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, prohibits DHS from using funds to establish a CBRNE office until Congress approves it.

GAO was asked to review the proposed consolidation of DHS's CBRNE programs. This report discusses: (1) the extent to which DHS's proposal assessed the benefits and limitations of consolidation and (2) GAO's key practices from past organizational transformations that could benefit DHS, should Congress approve the proposed consolidation.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS complete, document, and make available analyses associated with identifying: (1) unintended problems, if any, that consolidation may create; (2) a comparison of the consolidation's benefits and costs; and (3) a broader range of external stakeholder input. Although DHS did not concur, GAO continues to believe that findings documented in the report support the recommendation. DHS concurred with GAO's additional recommendation that should Congress approve DHS's plan, the department use key mergers and organizational transformation practices identified in previous GAO work.

View [GAO-16-603](#). For more information, contact Chris Currie at (404) 679-1875 or curriec@gao.gov.

August 2016

HOMELAND SECURITY

DHS's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives Program Consolidation Proposal Could Better Consider Benefits and Limitations

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) documentation related to its proposed consolidation of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) programs offers some insights into benefits and limitations considered, but the information provided to GAO did not include several key factors to consider when evaluating an organizational consolidation. While developing its consolidation plan, DHS identified strategic goals, such as eight near-term goals to be achieved within the first two years. DHS also considered problems its consolidation is intended to solve, including providing a clearer focal point for external and DHS component engagement on CBRNE issues. However, DHS:

- Did not fully assess and document potential problems that could result from consolidation.
- Did not include a comparison of benefits and costs.
- Conducted limited external stakeholder outreach in developing the consolidation proposal and thus the proposal may not sufficiently account for stakeholder concerns.

Attention to these key areas, identified from GAO's analysis of previous organizational consolidations, would help provide DHS, Congress, and other stakeholders with assurance that important aspects of effective organizational change are addressed as part of the agency's CBRNE reorganization decision-making process.

Key mergers and organizational transformation practices identified in previous GAO work could benefit DHS if Congress approves the proposed CBRNE consolidation. GAO reported in July 2003 on key practices and implementation steps for mergers and organizational transformations that range from ensuring top leadership drives the transformation to involving employees in the implementation process to obtain their ideas and gain their ownership for the transformation. In addition, the practices would be helpful in a consolidated CBRNE environment. For example, overall employee morale differs among the components to be consolidated, making the key practice of employee involvement to gain their ownership for the transformation a crucial step. Also, given the wide range of activities conducted by the consolidated entities, the key practice of establishing a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals to guide the transformation will be important. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, prohibits DHS from using funds to establish a CBRNE office until Congress approves it, and, as of June 2016, Congress had not approved DHS's consolidation proposal. However, should DHS receive this approval, consulting GAO's key practices would help ensure that lessons learned from other organizations are considered.