



Highlights of [GAO-04-591](#), a report to the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Terrorist attacks, both before and after September 11, 2001, have increased congressional concerns regarding the complexity, funding, and oversight of federal programs designed to combat terrorism and ensure homeland security. Hundreds of recommendations have been made by nationally chartered commissions and GAO to further improve our nation's strategic planning and program development in homeland security. GAO was asked to review the reports of selected congressionally chartered commissions and previously issued GAO reports and testimonies in order to identify the strategic recommendations made and organize them both by critical mission area and topic area.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Selected Recommendations from Congressionally Chartered Commissions and GAO

What GAO Found

GAO categorized 114 strategic commission recommendations and 59 strategic GAO recommendations under six distinct critical mission areas identified in the *National Strategy for Homeland Security*: intelligence and warning, border and transportation security, domestic counterterrorism, protection of critical infrastructure and key assets, defending against catastrophic threats, and emergency preparedness and response. GAO's categorization process determined that the greatest number of commission and GAO recommendations related to the emergency preparedness and response critical mission area, while the fewest related to the border and transportation security critical mission area.

GAO determined as well that both the commission and GAO recommendations could generally be categorized under several topic areas within the six critical missions, including changes in general approach or priorities; creation and/or consolidation of organizations and systems; and assignment of specific functions to DHS and other departments/agencies. Additional topic areas included a need for operational and technological improvements; increased readiness; improved management; increased coordination among federal, state, local governments and the private sector; and enhanced or clarified federal or state authorities.

This report can serve as a readily available, compact checklist of strategic recommendations on homeland security and as a reference document for legislatures, executive departments and agencies, and working groups addressing homeland security issues.

First Responders Practicing Decontamination During An Exercise



Source: GAO.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-591.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randall A. Yim at (202) 512-8777 or yimr@gao.gov.