



Highlights of [GAO-09-904SP](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

While national security activities, which range from planning for an influenza pandemic to Iraq reconstruction, require collaboration among multiple agencies, the mechanisms used for such activities may not provide the means for interagency collaboration needed to meet modern national security challenges. To assist the 111th Congress and the new administration in developing their oversight and management agendas, this report, which was performed under the Comptroller General's authority, addresses actions needed to enhance interagency collaboration for national security activities: (1) the development and implementation of overarching, integrated strategies; (2) the creation of collaborative organizations; (3) the development of a well-trained workforce; and (4) the sharing and integration of national security information across agencies. This report is based largely on a body of GAO work issued since 2005.

What GAO Recommends

Since 2005, GAO has recommended that agencies incorporate desirable characteristics of national strategies, take actions to create collaborative organizations, address a wide range of human capital issues, and establish or clarify guidelines for sharing national security information. Agencies have taken some actions to enhance interagency collaboration, but much work remains.

[View GAO-09-904SP or key components.](#) For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at (202) 512-4300 or Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers at (202) 512-3101.

INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Key Issues for Congressional Oversight of National Security Strategies, Organizations, Workforce, and Information Sharing

What GAO Found

Based on prior work, GAO has found that agencies need to take the following actions to enhance interagency collaboration for national security:

Develop and implement overarching strategies. Although some U.S. government agencies have developed or updated overarching strategies on national security issues, GAO has reported that in some cases, such as U.S. government efforts to improve the capacity of Iraq's ministries to govern, U.S. efforts have been hindered by multiple agencies pursuing individual efforts without an overarching strategy. In particular, a strategy defining organizational roles and responsibilities and coordination mechanisms can help agencies clarify who will lead or participate in activities, organize their joint and individual efforts, and facilitate decision making.

Create collaborative organizations. Organizational differences—including differences in agencies' structures, planning processes, and funding sources—can hinder interagency collaboration, potentially wasting scarce funds and limiting the effectiveness of federal efforts. For example, defense and national intelligence activities are funded through separate budgets. Disagreement about funding from each budget led to the initial operating capability date being pushed back 1 year for a new space radar system. Coordination mechanisms are not always formalized or not fully utilized, potentially limiting their effectiveness in enhancing interagency collaboration.

Develop a well-trained workforce. Collaborative approaches to national security require a well-trained workforce with the skills and experience to integrate the government's diverse capabilities and resources, but some federal government agencies lack the personnel capacity to fully participate in interagency activities. Some federal agencies have taken steps to improve their capacity to participate in interagency activities, but personnel shortages have impeded agencies' ability to participate in these activities, such as efforts to integrate personnel from other federal government agencies into the Department of Defense's (DOD) new U.S. Africa Command. Increased training opportunities and strategic workforce planning efforts could facilitate federal agencies' ability to fully participate in interagency collaboration activities.

Share and integrate national security information across agencies. Information is a crucial tool in national security and its timely dissemination is critical for maintaining national security. However, despite progress made in sharing terrorism-related information, agencies and private-sector partners do not always share relevant information with their national security partners due to a lack of clear guidelines for sharing information and security clearance issues. For example, GAO found that non-DOD personnel could not access some DOD planning documents or participate in planning sessions because they may not have had the proper security clearances. Additionally, incorporating information drawn from multiple sources poses challenges to managing and integrating that information.