

Highlights of GAO-05-547, a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece, were held against the backdrop of growing concerns about international terrorism. Despite widespread fears of a potential terrorist attack on the Olympics, Greece hosted a safe and secure event with no terrorist incidents.

To assist Greece in securing the 2004 Games, U.S. government agencies provided training and other support in the four years leading up to the Games. In addition, the U.S. government provided some security and other assistance to American athletes, spectators, and commercial investors, and expects to continue such support for future Olympics, including the upcoming 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy.

GAO was asked to (1) determine the U.S. approach and coordination efforts for providing security assistance to the 2004 Summer Olympics; (2) examine the roles of U.S. agencies in Athens Olympics security and their financial outlays; and (3) review lessons learned in providing security assistance in support of the Olympics and how they are being incorporated into preparations for future Olympics.

The Departments of State, Homeland Security, Defense, and Justice concurred with the report or had no comments.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/get rpt?GAO-05-547.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov.

May 2005

OLYMPIC SECURITY

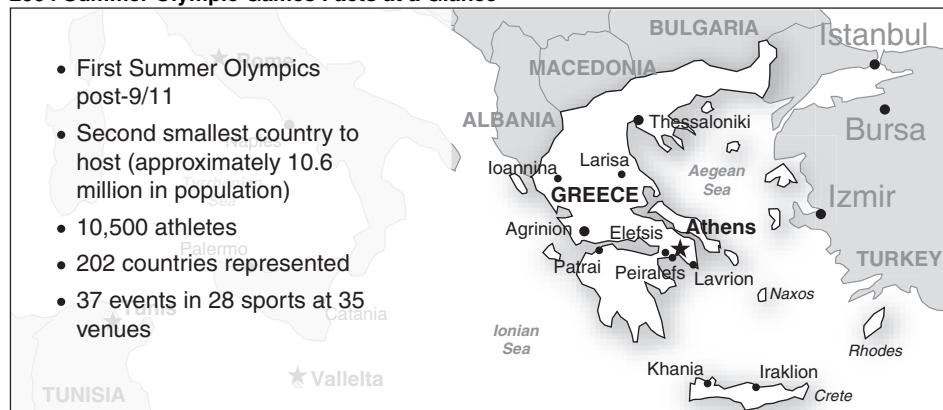
U.S. Support to Athens Games Provides Lessons for Future Olympics

What GAO Found

In 2001, the United States began planning its security assistance for the 2004 Summer Olympics, responding to the heightened worldwide anxiety following the September 11 attacks and Greece's request for international advice on its security plan. The United States based much of its security assistance on knowledge gained through Greece's participation in the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance Program and through the staging of a major U.S. military exercise in March 2004. Based on these assessments, the United States employed a coordinated approach in providing security assistance to Greece for the Olympics. The U.S. Ambassador in Greece coordinated and led the U.S. interagency efforts in-country, while the State-chaired interagency working group in Washington, D.C., coordinated domestic contributions. Furthermore, the United States participated in a seven-country coordination group that aimed to identify potential areas of cooperation on security and support for Greece.

Almost 20 entities and offices within a number of U.S. agencies provided more than \$35 million in security assistance and support to the government of Greece. The Departments of State, Homeland Security, Defense, and Justice provided security training to various elements of the Greek government; the Departments of Energy and Justice provided crisis response assistance during the Olympics; and the State Department also provided special security and other assistance to U.S. athletes, spectators, and corporate sponsors. Following the 2004 Summer Games, these U.S. agencies identified a number of lessons learned, such as the importance of assessing host governments' security capabilities early to assist in planning U.S. support, appointing key personnel to craft unified messages for the U.S. security efforts, and coordinating with multilateral and other organizing entities. These lessons were then communicated by Washington, D.C.- and Athens-based personnel to U.S. officials in Italy who are preparing to support the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin.

2004 Summer Olympic Games Facts at a Glance



Sources: GAO (data); MapArt.