

Why GAO Did This Study

In the years following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Congress enacted the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which gives the Director of National Intelligence the responsibility to establish a personnel rotational program (the Joint Duty Program) across the IC. The intended purpose is to facilitate IC personnel's understanding of the wide range of intelligence requirements, methods, users, and capabilities. GAO evaluated the extent to which (1) IC elements are participating in the Joint Duty Program, (2) the ODNI has developed a strategic framework to help ensure the effective implementation of the Joint Duty Program, and (3) ODNI has established training and education programs to support the Joint Duty Program. GAO reviewed the Joint Duty Program's legislative requirements and guidance, analyzed data on program participants, and interviewed program officials from the entire IC.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DHS take steps to have the Coast Guard participate in the Joint Duty Program. GAO also recommends that ODNI develop a strategic framework to implement the program across the IC and that ODNI establish and document the program's training requirements and develop a plan and timeline for implementing them. DHS and the Coast Guard agreed with GAO's recommendation to the Coast Guard. ODNI generally agreed with GAO's recommendations, but raised concerns about the findings on performance goals and the strategic framework. GAO continues to believe in the findings as stated in the report.

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INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY PERSONNEL

Strategic Approach and Training Requirements Needed to Guide Joint Duty Program

What GAO Found

All of the Intelligence Community (IC) elements except for one are participating in the Joint Duty Program and the IC elements generally view the program as beneficial. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), the Defense Security Service, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, and 15 other IC components have identified an office or individual responsible for facilitating the program. However, the U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard), which ordinarily operates under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), does not participate in the program, even though the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 and IC guidance stipulate that the Joint Duty Program applies to the defined IC, which includes the Coast Guard's civilian personnel in its National Intelligence Element. Coast Guard officials stated it delayed its participation in the program because it first plans to conduct a workforce study that will determine how the Coast Guard will participate, but it has not identified a timeframe for the study's completion, and the position assigned to conduct the study is currently vacant. As a result, personnel in other IC elements may not fully understand the Coast Guard's intelligence mission and Coast Guard employees may have limited opportunities to collaborate with other IC elements.

ODNI has not established a strategic framework to guide the implementation of the Joint Duty Program across the IC. GAO has noted in prior work the importance of having a strategic framework to guide program implementation. However, ODNI has not clearly defined the program's mission, established performance goals, and measured progress toward achieving those goals. Further, program officials told GAO that they collected IC element data on joint duty rotations, but GAO found that they had not used these data to evaluate progress toward achieving program goals. In addition, although the Director of National Intelligence has emphasized the importance of the program, GAO found that the ODNI Joint Duty Program Office Chief position has experienced repeated turnover since the program's inception. Specifically, five different people have served in the Joint Duty Program Chief position in the past 3 years. Further, ODNI officials stated that the Joint Duty Chief position had recently been downgraded from a Senior National Intelligence Service position to a General Schedule 15 position. Absent a comprehensive strategic framework that transcends turnovers in program leadership, program efforts are disjointed, and decision makers within ODNI lack the information they need to successfully manage the program.

ODNI also has not formally established professional training and education programs to support the Joint Duty Program, as directed in 2007 ODNI guidance. ODNI has identified three IC-related courses intended for personnel participating in the Joint Duty Program but has waived the requirement to complete these courses. Officials from nine IC elements expressed various concerns about the content and rigor of the three courses, such as that the courses could be duplicative of existing agency-specific training courses. Further, ODNI has not yet determined or documented the program's training requirements in guidance and has not yet developed a plan and timeline for implementing the training. As a result, ODNI is not positioned to use the Joint Duty Program to foster the widest possible understanding of intelligence requirements, methods, users, and capabilities.