

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107317](#), a report to congressional committees

February 2025

DHS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

Improved Guidance on Revised Acquisition Goals Would Enhance Transparency



Offshore Patrol Cutter



Border Security



FEMA Disaster Relief

Source (left to right): U.S. Coast Guard; CBP/Josh Denmark; and FEMA/Patsy Lynch. | GAO-25-107317

Why GAO Did This Study

DHS plans to spend over \$41 billion to acquire systems for its current portfolio of major acquisition programs.

The Explanatory Statement accompanying a bill for the DHS Appropriations Act, 2015 includes a provision for GAO to review DHS's major acquisitions on an ongoing basis. This report assesses (1) the extent to which major programs are meeting cost and schedule goals; (2) the status of cost or schedule risks; and (3) opportunities for improvement.

GAO selected 24 of DHS's largest acquisition programs to determine program status as of the end of fiscal year 2024. Of these, GAO identified 17 with DHS-approved acquisition baselines for further analysis. GAO reviewed key documents; collected cost, schedule, and performance information; and interviewed DHS officials. GAO also reviewed prior GAO recommendations to DHS.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DHS update its guidance to specify the types of change drivers that major acquisition programs document when revising baselines. DHS agreed with this recommendation.

View [GAO-25-107317](#). For more information, contact Travis J. Masters at (202) 512-4841 or masters@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) invests billions of dollars to acquire systems and capabilities that advance maritime safety, respond to natural disasters, secure the border, and more.

All but one of the 17 DHS major acquisition programs with DHS-approved baselines that GAO analyzed are meeting their current cost and schedule goals; however, nearly all of the programs had revised their goals at least once, with seven having revised their goals three or more times. These goals are set in their acquisition program baselines—the agreement between programs and decision-makers about an acquisition's cost and when its capabilities will be delivered. Revisions can reflect increased costs, changes in capabilities, or result in new milestone dates. For instance, since these 17 programs initially set their cost goals, the goals have increased from a total of \$33.1 billion to \$41.3 billion.

GAO found that several programs revised their baselines without clearly documenting the reasons for the revisions in the approved baseline document. DHS's guidance notes the importance of tracking the causes of baseline revisions but does not specify the types of change drivers that can result in revisions, such as a change in requirements. If programs consistently document the change drivers that led to revised baselines, decision-makers would better understand how well programs, especially older ones, are executed over time.

Further, over half of DHS's 24 major programs face cost or schedule risks.

Costs risks. Two Coast Guard programs that comprised over a third of DHS's estimated acquisition costs in fiscal year 2024—Polar Security Cutter (PSC) and Offshore Patrol Cutter—are likely to drive cost growth in fiscal year 2025. For instance, in August 2024, the Congressional Budget Office estimated the PSC program cost to be about \$2 billion over the program's current cost goal.

Schedule risks. Fifteen programs face potential delays moving forward, including multiple Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection programs. Program officials cited reasons such as funding challenges, among others.

Since 2014, GAO has made about 220 acquisition and major acquisition program policy recommendations to DHS. The agency has addressed most of these recommendations, but almost 50 recommendations have not yet been fully addressed. These recommendations represent opportunities for improvement in areas such as Coast Guard acquisitions and DHS's acquisition workforce.