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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-467T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, and Fisheries, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Coast Guard is one of 22 agencies being placed in the new Department of Homeland Security. With its key roles in the nation's ports, waterways, and coastlines, the Coast Guard is an important part of enhanced homeland security efforts. But it also has non-security missions, such as search and rescue, fisheries and environmental protection, and boating safety. GAO has conducted a number of reviews of the Coast Guard's missions and was asked to testify about the Coast Guard's implementation challenges in moving to this newly created Department.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making new recommendations in this testimony, but past reports have made specific recommendations aimed at some of these implementation challenges, such as developing a long-term strategy for how its resources will be used among its various missions.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-467T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-467T).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact JayEtta Hecker at (202) 512-2834 or [heckerj@gao.gov](mailto:heckerj@gao.gov).

## HOMELAND SECURITY

# Challenges Facing the Coast Guard as it Transitions to the New Department

## What GAO Found

The Coast Guard faces major challenges in effectively implementing its operations within the Department of Homeland Security. GAO has identified critical success factors for reorganizing and restructuring agencies, and its recent work in reviewing the Coast Guard has focused on challenges dealing with six of these factors—strategic planning, communications and partnership-building, performance management, human capital strategy, information management and technology, and acquisition management.

The Coast Guard faces challenges in all of these areas. The difficulty of meeting these challenges is compounded because the Coast Guard is not just moving to a new parent agency: it is also substantially reinventing itself because of its new security role. Basically, the agency faces a fundamental tension in balancing its many missions. It must still do the work it has been doing for years in such areas as fisheries management and search and rescue, but now its resources are deployed as well in homeland security and even in the military buildup in the Middle East. The Coast Guard's expanded role in homeland security, along with its relocation in a new agency, have changed many of its working parameters, and its adjustment to this role remains a work in process. Much work remains. Some of the work is strategic in nature, such as the need to define new missions and redistribute resources to meet the wide range of missions. Others include accommodating a sudden surge of new positions or trying to ensure that its most ambitious acquisition project—the Deepwater Project—remains viable.



The Coast Guard is still in the process of determining how the use of resources such as this patrol boat will be divided among the many missions the agency must meet.

Source: U.S. Coast Guard.