



Highlights of [GAO-06-295](#), a report to the House and Senate Subcommittees on Homeland Security, Committees on Appropriations

Why GAO Did This Study

In September 2004, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established America's Shield Initiative (ASI)—a program that included a system of sensors, cameras, and databases formerly known as the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System (ISIS)—to detect, characterize, and deter illegal breaches to the northern and southern U.S. borders. The goals of the ASI program were to address ISIS capability limitations and support the department's antiterrorism mission. In April 2005, department officials told GAO that ISIS was subsumed within ASI.

By congressional mandate, GAO reviewed the program to determine (1) the operational needs that ASI was intended to address and DHS's plans for ASI, (2) the steps that DHS had taken to ensure that ASI was aligned with the department's enterprise architecture, and (3) the actions that DHS had taken to establish the capability to effectively manage ASI.

In written comments, DHS agreed with a draft of this report, stating that it was factually correct in virtually all aspects. DHS also commented that it has ceased work on ASI and redirected resources to its Secure Border Initiative. It also described program management corrective actions that it plans to implement.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-295.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Randolph C. Hite, (202) 512-3439, hiter@gao.gov.

BORDER SECURITY

Key Unresolved Issues Justify Reevaluation of Border Surveillance Technology Program

What GAO Found

The ASI program defined the operational needs it expected ASI to meet, including addressing both known limitations in the ISIS and supporting counterterrorism efforts. The program also developed key planning documents for approval by the DHS Investment Review Board that were intended to meet these needs, including a program management plan, acquisition plan, and preliminary operational requirements document. However, these plans were not approved.

The Review Board recently reviewed the ASI program and found, among other things, that it was aligned with the department's enterprise architecture. However, the reviews also determined that the program had not adequately defined its relationships and dependencies with other department programs. Subsequently, the DHS Deputy Secretary directed that the program be reevaluated within the department's broader border and interior enforcement strategy, now referred to as the Secure Border Initiative.

The ASI program had not established the people and process capabilities required for effective program management. As of August 2005, it had filled 30 of its 47 program office positions, and it had defined roles and responsibilities for only 3 of them. In addition, while the program had defined and begun implementing a plan to manage program risks, it had not yet defined key acquisition management processes, such as effective project planning, and contract tracking and oversight. As a result, the program risked repeating the inadequate contract management oversight that led to a number of problems in deploying, and operating and maintaining ISIS technology.

DHS's decision to reevaluate ASI was justified by the existence of unresolved key issues cited above (addressing its impact on other programs, and establishing people and process capabilities required for effective program management). These issues, if not addressed, would have introduced unnecessary risk. It is important that the department's reevaluation consider all such issues that could affect program success.