

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Scientists remind us the plural of “anecdote” is not “data.” In the realm of national security, a similar axiom would hold the proliferation of counterterrorism strategies does not necessarily mean we are any safer. Only if those strategies guide us inexorably and measurably toward clearly articulated goals will they secure our liberty and prosperity against the threats of a new and dangerous era.

Prior to September 11th 2001, this Subcommittee heard testimony based on the work of the three national commissions on terrorism – Bremer, Gilmore and Hart-Rudman – citing the lack of any overarching counterterrorism strategy. Last year, witnesses told us the Bush Administration had succeeded in filling the strategic void with no less than eight high-level mission statements on: national security, military strategy, global terrorism, homeland security, weapons of mass destruction, money laundering, cyber security and critical infrastructure.

These strategies address the need for a post-Cold War security paradigm that replaces containment and mutually assured destruction with detection, prevention, and at times preemptive action to protect the fundamental interests of the United States. But the multi-dimensional threat of terrorism demands levels of strategic dynamism, flexibility and accountability never required to meet the relatively static Soviet menace.

So we asked the General Accounting Office (GAO), to describe the fundamental characteristics of a coherent strategic framework; one that clearly states a purpose, assesses risk, sets goals, defines needed resources, assigns responsibilities and integrates implementation. According to their analysis, current strategies contain many of these traits to some degree, but do not yet include key elements, particularly in the areas of resource implications and coordination to avoid duplication.

Yesterday, the President's proposed budget for the next fiscal year outlined the near- and long-terms costs of the war against terrorism. The strategies under discussion here today contain the words that are supposed to be driving those numbers toward achievement of high-level but tangible national goals. How can those strategies be clearer, more concrete and more tightly integrated into an inescapably logical whole? How will we know if programs are achieving strategic objectives?

Testimony by GAO, and by our second panel of expert witnesses, will help us answer these questions and assess the strengths and weaknesses of current counterterrorism strategies. We are grateful for the insight and expertise they bring to our ongoing oversight and we look forward to their testimony.